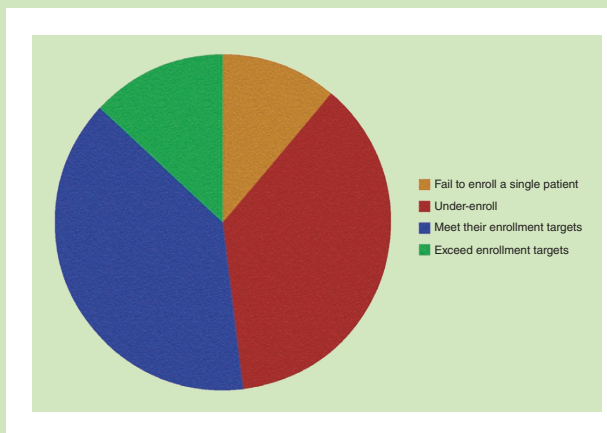


Study sites struggle to enroll participants in clinical trials

Nearly half of all sites involved in mid- to late-stage clinical trials fail to meet their enrollment targets, and those sites that do sign up study participants for one trial are no more likely to meet recruitment measures for the next trial, according to a study published in the January/February 2013 issue of the *Tufts Center for the Study of Drug Development (CSDD) Impact Report*. “The entire site selection process is very, very inefficient, and site performance is volatile and unpredictable,” says study author Ken Getz, director of sponsored research at the Tufts CSDD in Boston, who looked at 150 multicenter trials involving nearly 16,000 investigative sites around the world for his analysis. “In this current environment, where companies are constantly looking for ways to operate more efficiently, the findings suggest that investigative site selection and management is probably one of the most important areas where they should focus.



Tufts Center for the Study of Drug Development

all those roles with company insiders, including from its Maryland-based subsidiary MedImmune. Another position designed to connect sales and R&D had not yet been filled as *Nature Medicine* went to press.

Reed comes to Roche

Roche has looked to California again to help revive its flagging R&D operations. In 2009, the Swiss drug giant purchased South San Francisco-based Genentech, best known for its cancer drugs. And last month, Roche tapped John Reed, chief executive of the Sanford-Burnham Medical Research

Institute in La Jolla, to lead its pharmaceutical research and early development group (which does not include Genentech). Reed (pictured), a pioneer in the field of cell death who has sat on the boards of drug companies but never had a full-time industry job before, will start working in Basel, where Roche is based, in April. “It’s definitely a positive for Roche,” says Odile Rundquist, a pharmaceutical analyst at Helvea in Geneva. “We know that the R&D from the Roche group has been lagging compared to Genentech, and John Reed is a leading researcher.”

RESEARCH

Stemming ALS

The strategy of transplanting neural stem cells is showing early promise for treating amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). At a conference in mid-December, Jonathon Glass, director of the Emory ALS Center in Atlanta, presented autopsy data from an ongoing phase 1 trial sponsored by Maryland-based Neuralstem that demonstrated long-term survival of transplanted spinal



Sanford-Burnham

cord stem cells among participants who had died following treatment. Meanwhile, a team led by Evan Snyder, director of the Sanford-Burnham stem cell program, performed a meta-analysis of 11 previous studies that transplanted human and mouse neural stem cells into the spinal cords of mice with ALS-like disease. The introduced cells, they reported on 19 December, rescued malfunctioning nerve cells and helped preserve and regenerate brain tissue in the animal models (*Sci. Transl. Med.* **4**, 165–164, 2012). “Our work would support the logic for such clinical trials, assuming the rationale is one of neuroprotection,

More online

Watch a video of the pill-sized device described on page 238 that provides a rapid, detailed view inside the esophagus: go.nature.com/q7oc2u



Tearney Lab, MGH

anti-inflammation and suppression of disease-promoting host cells,” says Snyder.

Privacy compromised

Cross-referencing DNA sequence data with public-record and genealogy databases on the Internet can unmask the identity of supposedly anonymous research donors. The findings, reported last month in *Science* (**339**, 321–324, 2013), are the latest in a series of reports that have highlighted the potential for privacy breaches in public repositories of genomic data. “We need [sponsors of genomic studies] to be respectful to participants, to tell them the truth: that someone can identify you,” says study author Yaniv Erlich, a geneticist at the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research in Cambridge, Massachusetts. See go.nature.com/wtHCHS for more.

Corrections

The article entitled “Call in the backup” in the November 2012 issue (*Nat. Med.* **18**, 1602–1606, 2012) misspelled Rajesh Ranganathan’s first name as Rajan. The error has been corrected in the HTML and PDF versions of the article.

In the January 2013 issue, the article entitled “NIH will withhold grant money to enforce public-access policy” (*Nat. Med.* **19**, 3, 2013) incorrectly stated that the NIH publishes journals’ submission policies when they actually only provide a search tool to assist researchers in determining the policy. The article also incorrectly stated that 25% of researchers don’t comply with the policy, when, in fact, 25% of articles don’t comply. The errors have been corrected in the HTML and PDF versions of the article.