



## Tobacco documents to be placed on the web

A \$15 million gift from the American Legacy Foundation to the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), will be used to create a permanent internet archive of around 10 million once-secret tobacco industry documents. Two new programs will also be created: the American Legacy Foundation National Tobacco Documents Library and the Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education.

UCSF professor of medicine, Stanton Glantz, a well-known scholar of the tobacco industry will direct the center. "Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death and disease" says Glantz, who says that the medical value of the documents is "tremendous." He adds, "They are the equivalent of the human genome for tobacco. They give a full view of the inside structure of the tobacco industry." Glantz currently heads research on the effects of passive smoking and the

incidence of heart disease. He is also involved in public policy issues such as how the industry interferes with tobacco control strategy.

The American Legacy Foundation was founded in 1998 as part of the \$250 billion Master Settlement Agreement between 46 US States and tobacco companies (*Nature Med.* 5, 10; 1999).

Part of the agreement was the creation of industry-maintained web sites for such documents, and there are six such sites. However, these sites have limited search functionalities and in 2010 the tobacco industry has the right to remove documents from the internet according to the terms of the Master Settlement Agreement.

The UCSF site is independent of tobacco industry influence and documents will be freely and openly available to the public. Glantz hopes it will "completely transform the entire issue."

Stephanie Irvine, Denver

### First prize goes to Levine!

Arnold Levine, president of Rockefeller University, has become the first recipient of the largest cash prize in American biomedical research, the Albany Medical Center Prize worth \$500,000. The new award, established by New York philanthropist Morris "Marty" Silverman, is intended to honor a physician or scientist whose work has led to significant advances in health care and scientific research.

Levine, a member of the National Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Medicine, is best known for his isolation of the tumor suppressor gene, *p53*. Fifty five percent of human cancers express mutations in both *p53* alleles. *P53* is regulated by the oncoprotein MDM2, and overproduction of the latter inactivates *p53* leading to tumor formation. Levine's lab is presently investigating small molecules that would block the effects of MDM2 as potential anticancer drugs.



Courtesy of The Rockefeller University

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## Public views genetic research cautiously

The British public has a high degree of confidence in the potential therapeutic value of genetic research. But it is also very concerned about the potential misuses of genetic information and lacks confidence in government rules intended to prevent such abuses.

A survey of 1000 British adults, commissioned by the UK Human Genetics Commission (HGC), found that 88% of those interviewed were confident that new genetic developments will bring cures for many diseases. Higher scores correlated with higher levels of knowledge about genetics, and overall 35% of respondents "agreed strongly", and 53% "tended to agree" with this belief.

One third of respondents also agreed with the statement that "research on human genetics is tampering with nature and is therefore unethical". Agreement with this statement was particularly strong among those holding religious beliefs (36%), women (37%), and members of the Asian community (59%).

More than three quarters (77%) of respondents said that they had too little information about the rules and regulations covering biological developments, and seven in ten had "little or no confidence" that such rules and regulations are able to keep pace with new research developments. Ironically, a de-

## Spain enhances genomics effort

It may be a little late in the day, but Spain is making an effort to shore up its genome research programs. After telling parliament that "at the time [of the international human genome sequencing effort], either because there were other priorities or because it didn't comprehend the far-reaching implications, Spain decided not to participate in the genome project," Prime Minister José Maria Aznar added, "this has now been corrected."

The day before his speech, the Interministerial Commission of Science and Technology (CICYT) announced an increase in funds for genome research from Ptas 700 million (US\$ 4 million) to Ptas 8 billion. The money will come from the National Plan on Research and Development, however, Aznar's science adviser Pablo Vázquez, told *Nature Medicine* that the money isn't new but is "transferred from other projects of the ministries of health and science."

Miguel Beato, professor of molecular biology at Marburg University, Germany, and head of the Center of Genome Regulation (CRC)—due to open in 2003 within the Barcelona Biomedical Research Park—admits that Spain was not involved in the genome effort "because there was no comprehension in the science community of its importance." Beato says the government intends to create two national reference genome research centers in Barcelona and Madrid. A national ethics committee will also be established to deal with aspects of genomic research.

Xavier Bosch, Barcelona

sire for more information on regulations increased with levels of knowledge about genetics. Those with low levels of knowledge were more likely than others to say they already receive 'the right amount' of information on such regulations.

Finally, almost three quarters said that even genetic information which had been gathered by commercial organizations "should be publicly owned and available to all for use at no charge". Only 21% believed that such companies "should own the developments and be able to charge for its use". Results of the survey can be found at [http://www.hgc.gov.uk/business\\_publications\\_morigeneticattitudes.pdf](http://www.hgc.gov.uk/business_publications_morigeneticattitudes.pdf)

David Dickson, London