

It's that time of year again—time to look back at the good, the bad and the ugly developments in biomedical research during 2007.

Yearbook 2007

In the tradition of American high school yearbooks, we'd like to hand out a few awards to people we think have earned a special mention for 2007.

In April, **Wan Gang**, China's only noncommunist cabinet minister since the 1970s, was appointed the country's minister of Science and Technology. Wan is set to oversee China's 12 scientific research megaprojects, an overly ambitious plan launched in 2006 that aims to raise China's global profile in science within five years. This former president of Shanghai's Tongji University also has the most unenviable job of managing China's spending on research and development, projected to skyrocket from 236 billion Yuan (about US \$30 billion) to 900 billion Yuan by 2020.

Citing his concerns about the potential loss of independence of UK's Medical Research Council, **Colin Blakemore** announced in March that he would step down as chief of the agency in September. During his tenure, Blakemore balanced the council's budget, simplified grant procedures and promoted translational research. His highly regarded stint at the agency is likely to be missed by many British scientists.

In his role as the first US AIDS 'czar' from 2003 to 2006, **Randall Tobias** advocated abstinence over the use of condoms to curb the spread of HIV and required organizations that received US funds to sign a petition condemning sex work. On 26 April, Tobias proved the biggest hypocrite when he admitted that he had been a client of an alleged Washington, DC-based prostitution ring, prompting his resignation as head of the US Agency for International Development.

Steve Nissen, head of cardiovascular medicine at the famed Cleveland Clinic, in May proved that he is the most likely to stir up trouble when he used publicly available data to report that the popular diabetes drug Avandia may increase the risk of heart attacks and death. The US Congress later publicly rebuked the Food and Drug Administration for its lax oversight and Nissen, already a media darling, found himself even more in the spotlight.

Oscar the cat became famous in late July when his morbid talent was reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. According to an article in this prominent journal, Oscar prowls the halls of a nursing home in Providence, Rhode Island, pinpointing who is about to die by curling up in bed with the soon-to-be-departed soul—and meriting himself the 'purr-turbing' distinction of pet you'd least want in your lap.

Topping the list of *Forbes* magazine's 100 most influential women for the second year in a row, **Angela Merkel**, leader of the G8 group of nations, is enjoying the highest approval ratings of any German chancellor since World War II. Among the many scientific initiatives in Europe that the physicist-turned-politician has endorsed is the launch in February of the much-anticipated European Research Council. This most powerful woman of science is not without her critics, however: the future of Germany's health care system and her stance on nuclear energy are just two tense issues surrounding her leadership.

Most unenviable job



Most likely to be missed



Biggest hypocrite



Most likely to stir up trouble



Pet you'd least want in your lap



Most powerful woman of science

