

The year is nearly through—which makes it the perfect time to look back at what happened in 2008. In the following pages, we round up the biggest news and newsmakers in biomedical research this year.

# Yearbook 2008

**Robert Gallo** of the US and Luc Montagnier of France are commonly credited as the ‘co-discoverers’ of the virus that causes AIDS. Montagnier and his colleague Françoise Barré-Sinoussi first isolated HIV, but it was Gallo who provided strong evidence linking the virus to AIDS. So when news broke that the 2008 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine would go to Montagnier and Barré-Sinoussi but not Gallo, many researchers were shocked. Gallo handled the outcome with grace, saluting the French team and applauding the Nobel Assembly for honoring HIV research.

Beset with tainted milk scandals, a fractured healthcare system and an economic crisis, Chinese Health Minister **Chen Zhu** must be feeling a heavy weight on his shoulders. In China, the health minister has about as much power as a provincial governor, but that is not stopping Chen from trying to restructure the country’s entire healthcare system. Chen aims to provide 90% of China’s 1.3 billion people with medical insurance by 2010.

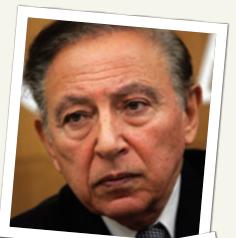
**Judah Folkman** transformed cancer research with his idea that tumors rely on angiogenesis, the proliferation of blood vessels, to nourish and support their growth (*N. Engl. J. Med.* 285, 1182–1186; 1971). Eventually Folkman’s ideas inspired treatments for cancer and macular degeneration, a disease that causes vision loss. As a professor at Harvard Medical School and director of vascular biology at Children’s Hospital Boston, Folkman was revered by many students and patients. He died of a heart attack on 14 January at the age of 74.

As the new chief executive of the European Science Foundation (ESF), **Marja Makarow** is charged with balancing the concerns and needs of 77 funding agencies and research institutions from 30 countries. ESF acts as a networking organization for Europe’s scientific community, publishing position papers, coordinating conferences and facilitating scientific cooperation across borders. Makarow, a Finnish biochemist who speaks multiple languages, seems particularly well-suited for this juggling act.

**Steven Haffner** must have forgotten how the peer review process works when he faxed GlaxoSmithKline a copy of an unpublished study that raised questions about the safety of its diabetes drug Avandia. Haffner, a professor at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio, had been entrusted as a reviewer for the *New England Journal of Medicine*. The event prompted an investigation by US Senator Charles Grassley, who pointed out that the pharmaceutical company had paid Haffner some \$75,000 in consulting and lecturing fees over the last several years.

This year, world-renowned psychiatrist **Charles Nemeroff** found himself at the center of an unprecedented US congressional investigation. According to documents obtained by the Senate Committee on Finance, the Emory University researcher failed to disclose about \$1.2 million in drug company consulting payments he had received between 2000 and 2007—a flagrant violation of the university’s conflict of interest policies. Nemeroff subsequently stepped down from his position as chair of the psychiatry department.

Faithful to the high school yearbook tradition, *Nature Medicine* has once again compiled a list of people who deserve special mention. For better or for worse, these individuals have made 2008 a memorable year in biomedical research.



Most gracious



Most likely to prescribe reform



Most likely to be missed



Most fluent in European science



Most likely to tell a secret



Most likely to keep a secret