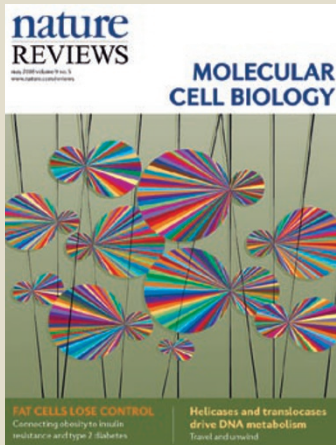




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► **COVER:** 'Asymmetric division' by Vicky Askew, inspired by the Review on p355



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As Jonathan W. Yewdell notes on page 413, “Biomedical research has never been more intellectually exciting or practically important to society. Ironically, pursuing a career as a biomedical scientist has never been more difficult”. Scientists at different stages in their careers can probably relate to this statement.

Choosing a graduate school, a laboratory and a mentor are daunting prospects for someone starting out in science. Yewdell emphasizes that rather than focusing on publications, graduate students should take the time to develop all of the necessary skills to become an independent researcher. The next step, choosing a laboratory to pursue research at the postdoctoral level, is arguably the most important decision in a scientist's career. After all, it should be in a field that a postdoctoral fellow would envisage starting his or her own independent career in.

As well as providing advice on the difficulties a scientist might face at different stages of his or her career, Yewdell stresses the need to enjoy being a scientist — there's the thrill of discovery, the creative satisfaction of designing the 'perfect' experiment, and the opportunity to make life-long scientist friends around the world. These are perks of the job that are all too easily forgotten in the rush to churn out research papers and submit grant applications.

Speaking of which, one of the most frustrating aspects of being a principal investigator is to secure continuous funding to run a laboratory. On page 417, Carl-Henrik Heldin recalls the establishment of the long-awaited European Research Council (ERC), which provides a new funding mechanism for basic science in the European Union. Although there are lessons to be learnt from the first call for applications, the ERC can hopefully give European scientists a much needed financial (and mental) boost!

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