

## Japanese researcher admits fabricating data

Osaka University researcher Akio Sugino acted alone in manipulating data for two papers in the *Journal of Biological Chemistry*, according to a report from the university's ethics committee last week.

The committee found no evidence linking the misconduct to the suicide of Yasuo Kawasaki, an assistant professor who helped blow the whistle on Sugino (see *Nature* 443, 253; 2006). But Sugino admits fabricating data for one of the articles, now retracted (W. Nakai *et al. J. Biol. Chem.* 10.1074/jbc.M603586200; 2006), saying he was rushing to meet a deadline for a student's grant application. According to the report, he claims that he planned to replace the data during the editorial process.

Sugino also admits there is confusion concerning data in the second paper (T. Seki *et al. J. Biol. Chem.* 281, 21422–21432; 2006), but claims he has original data to back it up. His co-authors have asked for a retraction.

Osaka University is now considering what disciplinary action to take. The 62-year-old Sugino is set to retire next March.

## Tycoon gives \$3 billion to climate-change initiatives

Is it philanthropy or a shrewd business decision? Richard Branson, the flamboyant British entrepreneur, has pledged to invest all profits from his transport businesses, including the Virgin Atlantic airline and Virgin Trains, into climate-change initiatives. The total is estimated to be US\$3 billion over the next 10 years.

Branson made the pledge at the Clinton Global Initiative conference in New York last week. He has already invested in Cilion, a California-based bioethanol company. And Virgin Fuels will put \$400 million over three years into biofuels investment and research.

The conference also saw promises from pharmaceutical company Pfizer, which has pledged \$15 million over five years for malaria research, and the International



Going green? Richard Branson will use profits from his transport businesses to tackle climate change.

## Laboratories shape up for the subcellular dance

US artist Mara Haseltine's sculptures are derived from images of viruses and subcellular components obtained by electron microscopy and nuclear magnetic resonance.

The sprawling *Waltz of the Polypeptides*, a section of which is pictured here, will be dedicated at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory in New York on 7 October. Another work, *SARS Inhibited*, was unveiled at the Biopolis research park in Singapore on 20 September. It represents the active site of a key enzyme in the SARS virus that can form a target for drugs against the disease. The viewer can stand inside the sculpture, becoming, metaphorically, the cure.

Haseltine's father, William, is a well-known geneticist.



M. HASELTINE

AIDS Vaccine Initiative, which has pledged \$2.5 million over three years towards tackling HIV in India.

## Report calls for changes to FDA to ensure drug safety

A committee of the US Institute of Medicine last week called for the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to be given more funding and authority to police the safety of prescription medicines.

The entire FDA is "severely underfunded", the authors write in their sharply worded report, but "resources for postmarketing drug safety work are especially inadequate".

The committee's report, *The Future of Drug Safety*, says drugs should carry a warning label and be subject to advertising restrictions for their first two years on the market. It also says the FDA should be given authority to fine companies that fail to carry out promised safety studies on marketed drugs. The agency requested the study in late 2004, shortly after Merck withdrew the painkiller Vioxx because of evidence that it increased the risk of heart attack and stroke.

But the drug industry's lobby group contests the report, saying fewer than 3% of prescription drugs have been withdrawn for safety reasons over the past two decades.

## Cash brings nuclear-fuel stockpile one step closer

A proposed international nuclear-fuel bank became more likely with the announcement last week of a US\$50-million donation to jump-start the project.

The money comes from the Nuclear Threat Initiative in Washington DC, which works to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. The group's co-chairman, former senator Sam Nunn, made the announcement

in Vienna at a meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The nuclear-fuel bank would supply partly enriched uranium to nations with operational nuclear power plants but no ability to enrich uranium themselves (see *Nature* 438, 268–269; 2005). The hope is to remove the incentive, and the justification, for countries such as Iran to develop their own uranium-enrichment capabilities.

But the pledge is contingent on IAEA member states contributing a further \$100 million, or an equivalent value of partly enriched uranium, and on the IAEA acting within two years to approve the reserve.

## Scientist jailed for series of animal-rights attacks

A cancer researcher at the University of Nottingham, UK, has been jailed for three years after pleading guilty to a series of attacks on the property of companies supplying equipment to the animal-research firm Huntingdon Life Sciences.

Joseph Harris is the first animal-rights activist to be convicted under the Serious and Organised Crime Act, introduced in 2005. His lawyer says his career placed him under increasing pressure to conduct animal experiments, which conflicted with his ethical beliefs.

Harris, who is not a member of any animal-rights group, caused damage totalling more than £25,000 (US\$50,000) to three firms whose details he apparently obtained from the Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty website.

### Correction

The story "That's no laser, it's a particle accelerator" (*Nature* 443, 256; 2006) incorrectly stated that the device described could accelerate electrons to 0.15% of their initial speed. That number actually refers to the change in kinetic energy of the electron bunches.