Correspondence

Russian science loses to politics

Philanthropist Dmitry Zimin is closing down his successful Dynasty Foundation — modern Russia's first private science-funding organization — after the Ministry of Justice fined it for being a "foreign agent" (see *Nature* **521,** 273; 2015). Like many other Russian scientists, we believe that these events will have dire immediate and long-term consequences for Russia's science.

Ironically, the government has been trying to revitalize Russian science in the past few years. Along with increased research funding to universities and a drastic overhaul of science management, it set up a mega-grant programme to attract back Russian scientists working abroad. It also created innovation centres and transferred fund management from the previously independent Russian Academy of Science to a government organization (see go.nature.com/m75bj4).

The controversial law that claimed the Dynasty Foundation is intended to curtail perceived foreign influence in Russian politics. This case suggests that the future of Russian science depends on political forces to a greater extent than the government seems prepared to acknowledge.

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India: multi-author papers skew ranking

Your ranking of India's top ten institutions, scored by the number of research papers in the Scopus citation database over the past five years, is distorted by the exceptionally large number of citations attracted by papers with hundreds of authors (see *Nature* **521,** 142–143; 2015).

This distortion is often corrected by limiting citations to individual authors — for example, by using an individual *h*-index for reference. Another corrective measure would be to exclude papers with more than 100 authors from citation metrics. For example, the Large Hadron Collider's ATLAS collaboration includes thousands of authors, so exclusion would have roughly the same effect as using the individual *h*-index (J. E. Hirsch *Proc. Natl Acad. Sci. USA* **102,** 16569–16572; 2005).

Exclusion would introduce major changes in some of your listed entries. For example, I calculate that about 20% of the publications attributed to the highly rated Panjab University have long author lists and contribute almost two-thirds of the citations. Excluding these papers reduces Panjab University's citation impact ratio from 1.4 to 0.7, causing it to drop out of your top ten; the fall is comparable for your second-placed Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in Mumbai. The fall for the Indian Institute of Technology at Bombay and Guwahati is less marked at 15% and 12%, respectively, because these each generate proportionally fewer papers with long author lists.

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India: assess social impact of technology

Researchers' priorities for improving science in India should include a commitment to assess the social impacts of new technologies in the Indian context (see *Nature* **521,** 151–155; 2015).

Big dams and atomic-energy programmes offered solutions to many of India's problems after independence in 1947; the green revolution and biotechnology followed. Stem-cell therapy, nanotechnology, synthetic biology and pharmacogenomics are all now taking off.

India sometimes seems prepared to overlook the potential societal consequences of such technologies in the name of development and progress. Its Land Acquisition Bill 2015, for example, seeks to exempt some important projects on defence, infrastructure and industrial regions from social assessment.

The impact of new technologies on India's sizeable poor and vulnerable population should be analysed before such innovations are introduced (see D. Greenbaum *Nature Biotechnol.* **33,** 425–426; 2015). Analysis would need to include investigation of their affordability and equitability (S. S. Tiwari and S. Raman *New Genet. Soc.* **33,** 413–433; 2014).

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Speed translation of misconduct reports

Two reports of scientific misconduct were publicly released around 19 May this year, relating to work by graduate student Michael LaCour at the University of California, Los Angeles, and by surgeon Paolo Macchiarini at Stockholm's Karolinska Institute (see *Nature* **521,** 406–407; 2015). Surprisingly, the unofficial report on LaCour's work spread like wildfire across the media, whereas the official report on Macchiarini's received relatively little attention.

This discrepancy could simply reflect popular interest in the different research areas investigated. But it is notable that the report on LaCour's work was in English (go.nature.com/5dyi6w), whereas that on Macchiarini's was first released in Swedish (go.nature.com/bzwaxt).

In my view, misconduct reports would be more useful if they were simultaneously translated into English, the common language of scientific discourse. This would allow the wider scientific community to immediately assess the validity of the claims and to avoid new research based on falsified findings.

Of the European non-English-speaking research integrity offices, only the Danish Committees on Scientific Dishonesty report in English. This hastens the all-important correction of the scientific record by enhancing accessibility and transparency.

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US sanctions alarm physicians from Iran

Iranian physicians in North America faced an unsettling constraint this month. Between 29 May and 5 June, the US Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) stopped processing requests to verify credentials issued by Iranian institutions, pending clarification of restrictions on interactions between US and Iranian medical and educational organizations (see go.nature.com/jrcxzz). The Medical Council of Canada, which also uses the ECFMG, made a similar announcement.

Iranian citizens are among the top ten groups of international physicians who acquired US certification in 2009 (see go.nature.com/ecmnkb) and were the largest group among immigrants entering post-medical training in Canada in the same year (see go.nature.com/95ayyf).

As Richard Nephew — a former senior US official and leading sanctions architect — has warned, there is a risk that the US foreign-policy tool of using sanctions to isolate Iran could backfire (see go.nature.com/ocrini).

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