

Correspondence

Nobel boost for basic research

At a time when curiosity-driven research struggles for respect, this year's Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine provides a visceral example of its value. The prize was won by James Allison and Tasuku Honjo for their discoveries of the potentially immunotherapeutic molecules CTLA-4 and PD-1, respectively (see *Nature* **562**, 20–21; 2018).

In 1990, when Jim suggested that we work on the role of a newly identified member of the immunoglobulin superfamily, called CTLA-4, we agreed simply because it was similar in sequence to another molecule, CD28, on the surface of mouse immune cells (T cells). We were investigating things about which we knew very little, with no inkling that the work would spawn a whole industry of life-saving drugs for tens of thousands of people with cancer.

Within 5 years of my start, we found that antibodies against CTLA-4 could harness T cells to destroy tumours in mice. Although extraordinary levels of current funding for variations on the checkpoint method (new molecules and reagents) and for T-cell therapies in general will yield more cures, the next generation of advances is likely to come from curiosity-based studies. These, too, will need substantial funding.

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Mentorship training will curb bullying

Academic mentorship is not synonymous with supervision. It is the nurturing of researchers' scientific and professional growth. Cultures that explicitly value and reward mentoring make it clear that bullying has no place in research (see also S. Moss *Nature* **560**, 529; 2018).

Crucially, mentorship also promotes constructive scientific

dialogue between mentors and trainees. Just like research and teaching, however, mentoring philosophy and practice cannot be learnt in standalone workshops. It must be continually refined and improved through feedback and institutional support. Proven initiatives at my own institution, for example, include encouraging mentors to exchange experiences and to share best practices.

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China tracks its progress on SDGs

China's progress in meeting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is being successfully monitored using geospatial and statistical information in a pilot scheme running in Deqing county, Zhejiang province.

A team of 20 researchers, led by the National Geomatics Center of China, measured 100 SDG indicators over the 938-square-kilometre county. In line with the UN Global SDG Indicator Framework, multi-scale and multi-type geospatial and statistical data were integrated for comprehensive measurement and evidence-based progress analysis. These data included topographic and land-cover maps, aerial and satellite images, disaggregated socio-economic information and environment statistics, as well as some from social media.

The conclusion is that the county, which has a population of around 430,000, has made significant economic and social advances and maintained a good ecological environment over the past 5 years. Challenges such as inadequate public transport in some regions have been drawn to the attention of policymakers.

An online public information service charts Deqing's progress towards achieving the SDGs. The pilot scheme's findings will be

discussed at the UN's first World Geospatial Information Congress later this month.

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Tap into the joy of open-access data

As an underfunded clinical researcher working in Jordan, I am limited to pursuing inexpensive observational studies that are based on patients' records. Happily, open-access data from repositories around the world have enabled me to make a bigger contribution to science.

My best experience was with the Biologic Specimen and Data Repository Information Coordinating Center, which curates data from large studies funded by the National Institutes of Health. I was able to access rigorous, high-quality data from almost 1,200 people with an inflammatory disease known as sarcoidosis, along with a control group. In Jordan, it would take me until I retired to generate this much data first-hand.

Our results will be published in the journal that hosted the original data. We completed two more studies on the same data set within six months (see S. A. AlRyalat *et al. Curr. Respir. Med. Rev.* **13**, 241–246; 2017).
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Don't dismiss Myers-Briggs

In his review of Merve Emre's book *The Personality Brokers: The Strange History of Myers-Briggs and the Birth of Personality Testing*, S. Alexander Haslam repeats the contention that the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) fails to "measure what it purports to measure" and to "elicit consistent responses

across testing contexts" and that it "has low validity" (*Nature* **561**, 176; 2018). As an author of works on this topic, I have presented considerable evidence to the contrary (see, for example, P. Moyle and J. Hackston *J. Pers. Assess.* **100**, 507–517; 2018).

Before dismissing the MBTI as lacking in reliability and validity, evaluators would do well to consult this and other peer-reviewed papers (see, for example, T. Sitzmann *et al. J. Appl. Psychol.* <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000352>; 2018). They can then make an informed judgement.

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Mekong's dams damn fisheries

One of the world's largest inland fisheries is under threat from overfishing, dams and habitat fragmentation. The Tonlé Sap Lake in the Mekong River Basin now yields stable harvests of only very small fish species. Stakeholders, government and developers must put conservation and mitigation measures in place before it's too late.

Hydropower construction is proliferating in the Lower Mekong Basin, disrupting natural seasonal river pulses and blocking the migration routes of riverine fishes. An estimated 60% of the catch in the Lower Mekong Basin is made up of migratory fish (G. Vaidyanathan *Nature* **478**, 305–307; 2011). People who live along the Mekong River and on the floodplain will be particularly affected because the local fish they consume also rely on migratory riverine species for prey.

Without urgent action, the outlook is bleak for this once-sustainable fishery.

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