

ence in China through the special section on this topic (17 Nov., pp. 1131–1154). The news article, "Government focuses funds, and hopes, on elite teams," by June Kinoshita (p. 1137) describes the state key, or national, laboratories. As with all national laboratories (1), the State Key Laboratory of Molecular Oncology (SKLMO) depends on the Cancer Institute for administrative support, but it is not under the direction of the Cancer Institute. The director of a state key laboratory is appointed by the responsible ministry, the Ministry of Health for the SKLMO. On the other hand, the Cancer Institute is under the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences, which in turn is under the Ministry of Health.

Generally, national laboratory directors are selected primarily according to scientific achievement rather than administrative experience. The director of the Cancer Institute has no power to select or appoint someone who is on the same level as or above himself in the administrative hierarchy. China has a strict retirement age limit for administrative positions, consequently, the "academician" (2) mentioned in your article, Wu Min, whom I have the pleasure of knowing, needed no persuasion to step down. The statement

that "It's not easy to convince an academician to step down" is not accurate. Wu was well aware of the age limit and, while still the director of SKLMO, he started looking for a successor and approached Sun Zhong Tan, who was then director, long before Dong Zhiwei was appointed director of the Cancer Institute.

When the state key laboratories were originally initiated, they were commonly called the open laboratories. The original idea was to break up the old stagnancy and encourage personnel exchange among scientific institutions. Each state key laboratory must have a certain proportion of external projects to internal projects. I believe the SKLMO is no exception; even if the director wanted to keep the old stagnancy, the SKLMO wouldn't be able to survive the scrutiny it undergoes by a panel of experts every few years. This system has been instrumental in promoting personnel exchange, much more so than the appointment of a new director to one state key laboratory.

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References and Notes

1. For a brief description of state key laboratories in China, see C.-L. Tsou, *FASEB J.* **3**, 2443 (1989).
2. We have members, but not "academicians" in the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Corrections and Clarifications

In the News & Comment article "Will NASA's research reforms fly?" (17 Nov., p. 1108), the events surrounding an experiment were incorrectly described on page 1110. The article should have said that a subject wearing an apparatus used to create lower-body negative pressure fainted during a test. (The experiment did not involve injection of a drug.)

Letters to the Editor

Letters may be submitted by e-mail (at science_letters@aaas.org), fax (202-289-7562), or regular mail (*Science*, 1333 H Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005, USA). Letters are not routinely acknowledged. Full addresses, signatures, and daytime phone numbers should be included. Letters should be brief (300 words or less) and may be edited for reasons of clarity or space. Letter writers are not consulted before publication.

