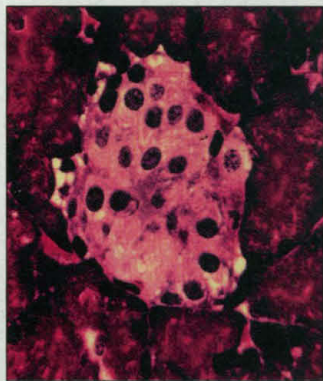


## New Funds for Diabetes Studies

Juvenile diabetes research is in the money after a private foundation donated nearly \$20 million to Harvard Medical School to fund research it hopes will help cure the disease. The Juvenile Diabetes Foundation International (JDF) and Harvard announced on 10 September the creation of a center dedicated to finding a way to replace the insulin-producing islet cells in the pancreas that the patient's own immune system destroys. The debilitating disease afflicts an estimated 700,000 people in the United States.

Researchers have enjoyed some success in transplanting islet cells, but recipients need heavy doses of immune sup-



Insulin-producing islet cells.

pression. That isn't appropriate in children, says Harvard immunologist Laurie Glimcher, who helped spark the idea for the center and was named an associate director. The JDF Center for Islet Cell Transplantation will fund 32 researchers to focus on the center's four main goals: Reversing the overactive immune response that kills islet cells; finding new

## RANDOM SAMPLES

edited by JENNIFER COUZIN

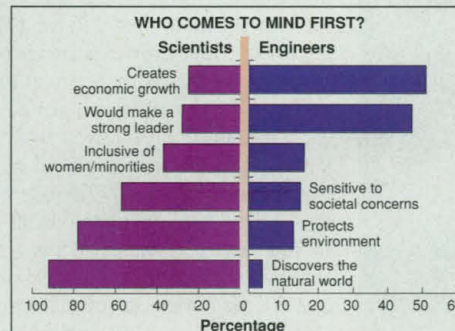
sources for islet cell transplants, such as pigs or genetically engineered cells; persuading the body to accept the transplanted cells without immunosuppressive drugs that often trigger worse side effects than the disease; and overcoming the technical difficulties of transplantation.

The new center is "definitely a good initiative," says

Camillo Ricordi, scientific director of the Diabetes Research Institute at the University of Miami in Florida. He adds: "It will bring more investigators to our field." Glimcher expects the center to have animal trials of transplants without immunosuppression up and running within a year; human trials, she says, could be just 3 years away.

## Deconstructing Dilbert

After engineers learned this summer that the general public deems their profession much less prestigious than that of scientists, the American Association of Engineering Societies (AAES) commissioned a Harris poll to find out what Americans really think of engineers. The results (see chart), says AAES spokesperson Greg Schuckman, help "deconstruct the whole Dilbert image." But a low rating on awareness of society's needs was disappointing. Partly in response to the poll, the AAES is planning a campaign to try to bolster public support for engineering.



## Forecast for Global Water Shortage

"Water, water every where, Nor any drop to drink": Poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge's words presaged a damning new report that predicts an impending global water crisis. Commissioned by Johns Hopkins University's School of Hygiene and Public Health, the report paints a gloomy picture, arguing that by 2025 more than a third of the world's population could suffer shortages of fresh water for drinking and irrigation.

The authors view their report as a call to arms. "I see lots of possibilities if governments just get the political will and some muscle behind their words," says lead author Don Hinrichsen, a consultant to the United Nations Population Fund in New York. He points to channeling water into artificial ponds as one way to conserve it. But Hinrichsen adds that the most vulnerable regions—mainly areas with high population growth in Asia and Africa—are already facing shortages. "We're coming to

the game late," says Sandra Postel, director of the Global Water Policy Project in Amherst, Massachusetts. "I don't see us mobilizing to really deal with the problem the way we need to."

## Saving Turtles

In a last-ditch effort to save thousands of olive ridley turtles, the Indian government last month launched a program to promote a safe haven for the endangered animals. But experts warn that with 13,500 turtle deaths this year alone, the fledgling Project Turtle may be too little, too late.

The turtle colony, on an island off India's east coast, has been battered in recent years by everything from cyclones to shrimp trawlers. Spurred by harsh media publicity and pressure from the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), India's Ministry of Envi-

ronment and Forests has committed \$250,000 for stepped-up patrols of the waters off the colony to prevent turtles from being snared in shrimp baskets and other nets. And that's just the beginning: The



Indian scientists tag an olive ridley turtle in coastal waters.

ministry hopes to get \$5 million over 5 years from the United Nations-funded Global Environment Facility for more aggressive conservation efforts, like tracking migration routes by satellite.

"Unless very urgent action is taken, the fate of this species is sealed forever," says Binod Chandra Choudhury, a WII marine biologist who conceived the project. Last month, 100 wildlife biologists signed a statement proclaiming that without broad conservation efforts at the national level, the turtle may become extinct within a decade.