

that a more balanced approach would be to publish an article which presents the strengths and achievements of environmental epidemiology.

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Science Professionals in Spain

In 1992, a large number of young Spanish scientists in postdoctoral training abroad were attracted back to Spain by a national program that offered 3-year contracts associated with granted research projects. However, the Spanish government has decided not to extend those contracts, apparently forgetting the reason why those people were attracted back. Permanent or nonpermanent positions offered by the universities or the Council for Scientific Research (CSIC) are scarce and mostly determined by friendship rather than by scientific criteria.

Spain cannot afford to waste time and money invested in our training, but this may happen because most of us are considering going abroad.

In view of this situation, we call for a

dignified, professional career, adequately paid, that would secure continuity of employment after regular assessments. We propose:

1) The removal of the 3-year limit on hiring contracts, as well as the reinstatement of those researchers already unemployed due to the termination of their contracts.

2) The creation of a position of researcher, not civil servant, with a 5-year contract that could be extended on the basis of professional performance. Researchers would have total independence in setting their research priorities, should be able to participate in more than one research project—even as main researcher, and be allowed to supervise the training of pre- and postdoctoral personnel. This figure is similar to that of other countries. It has been considered by some members of CSIC and has also been contemplated in the first draft of the bill for updating the University Reform Law (LRU).

3) The creation of enough long term positions, in a sustained manner in accordance with training initiatives, to secure the incorporation of this group of researchers into the scientific system in Spain.

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Heso-no-O: A Gift

We read with great interest "Umbilical cords: Turning garbage into clinical gold" by Clare Thompson (Research News, 12 May, p. 805), which indicated that umbilical cord blood is a valuable source for blood transplantation because it contains many stem cells and can be stored. We would like to propose one more useful application of umbilical cords. It is a traditional custom for Japanese parents to keep their baby's umbilical cord stumps (Heso-no-O). When an umbilical cord falls from a baby, it is preserved under dryness, put in a tiny box, and handed to the parents, so that they can keep the mummified tissue as long as they

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