Alcoholism in Montreal, Canada, from 70 to 39. The annual meeting of the American Society of Human Genetics, which ended this week in San Diego, went on without one-third of the 170 NIH people who had asked to attend. Dean Hamer of the National Cancer Institute says that one of his graduate students was permitted to go to a "premeeting" on gene linkage but was not allowed to stay on for the main affair. "It makes no sense whatsoever," Hamer says.

Scientists are now trying feverishly to overturn an HHS ruling that would allow only 550 of 761 researchers who requested permission to attend the Society for Neuroscience's annual meeting next month in San Diego. "Word keeps coming back to me that we are facing a stone wall," says one source. The wall appears to be the person of Ed Sontag, recently installed as assistant secretary for administration and management. Sontag, who has a Ph.D. in education and advised Thompson on educational matters when he was governor of Wisconsin, could not be reached for comment.

NIH officials thought they were making headway this summer after Thompson visited the Bethesda, Maryland, campus and heard from postdoctoral fellows upset at the prospect of being cut out of scientific meetings. "Thompson said, 'We need to fix this,'" reports an observer.

But nothing happened. In August, Michael Gottesman, NIH deputy director for intramural research, wrote to Thompson about the value of scientific meetings not just as a source of knowledge but also as a way to monitor grantees, recruit new talent, and nurture the careers of postdoctoral fellows. A visit by a contingent of institute directors headed by Francis Collins, director of the National Human Genome Research Institute, is also in the works. Their message will be simple, says one source: Meetings are the lifeblood of science.

–CONSTANCE HOLDEN

BIOMEDICAL PHILANTHROPY

Klausner Makes Case For New Foundation

Richard Klausner this month traded his biomedical research battleship for a speedboat, and he's looking forward to feeling the spray on his face. His transition from the $3.7 billion National Cancer Institute (NCI)—the flagship of the National Institutes of Health—to the Case Institute of Health, Science and Technology, a small outfit in Washington, D.C., has left colleagues curious. Last week, in an interview with *Science*, the 49-year-old biologist for the first time laid out his plans and how they will be funded.

Although the details are still being finalized, Klausner says the institute hopes to inject about $100 million over the next few years in two areas. One is a life sciences informatics initiative, aimed at developing better computerized systems for organizing and analyzing data; this will be largely in-house research. The other is a "molecular monitors" program that will disburse grants to develop technologies for identifying and monitoring specific chemicals linked to particular diseases and biological processes. The two thrusts, he says, are the "logical next steps to the things I loved to do at the cancer institute: large projects oriented toward the linkage of science and technology" that connect researchers in many fields.

With the explosion of knowledge in the life sciences, Klausner isn't worried about stepping on other funders' toes. The institute's areas of interest fall within "crowded fields," he admits, but they offer "some novel niches."

The new institute is funded by America Online founder Steve Case and his wife, Jean Case (*Science*, 14 September, p. 1967). Rather than drawing on the interest from an endowment, the institute is likely to operate on a pay-as-you-go basis, with the Cases providing fresh funds each year. The budget "would be driven by the science," Klausner says. "I like that [approach], rather than having to worry about investing the endowment."

The institute will soon occupy five buildings in Washington's central Dupont Circle neighborhood, with room for administrators, visiting scientists, and a significant in-house informatics program. Klausner's first top hire is MaryAnn Guerra, his former deputy director for management at NCI, who was tapped this week to be a vice president.

Catching the wave. Richard Klausner says the Case institute will be agile.

As for the reason he left NCI, Klausner said he relished the opportunity to lead a new organization that could change direction quickly. He also noted that instead of having scores of political bosses, he now answers to "a board of two people"—the Cases. The couple, he says, have been "very supportive" of letting him chart the institute's course.

–DAVID MALAKOFF

CREDITS: (LEFT TO RIGHT) SAM KITTNER; SANGER CENTRE

ScienceScope

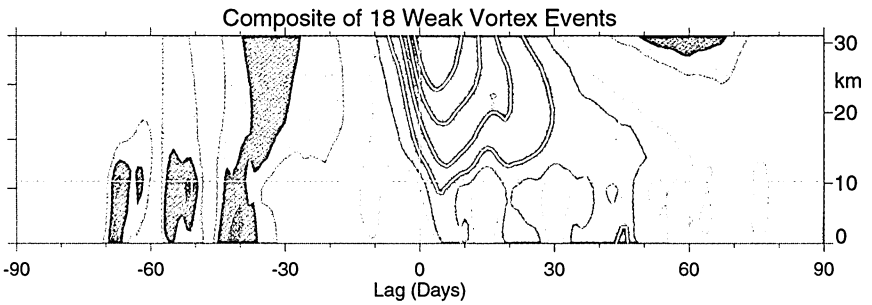
Sanger Secure The future of the Wellcome Trust Sanger Centre, which sequenced one-third of the human genome, is looking pretty secure. On 12 October, the trust—Britain's mammoth biomedical charity—announced that the Hinxton, U.K., institute will get $435 million over the next 5 years—enough money to take it soaring into the post-genomic era.

The new funds will be divvied up among a number of priorities, including $123 million for sequencing new genomes such as those of the mouse and the zebrafish, and $30 million for recruiting new scientists. Another big winner is the Sanger's 2-year-old Cancer Genome Project, which has already identified more than 80 genetic abnormalities implicated in human cancer. Wellcome originally awarded the project $14.5 million for its first 5 years; that figure will now more than triple to $52 million. The extra funds, says project co-director Richard Wooster, "will take us into full production scale."

Pediatric Research OK in Maryland The Maryland Court of Appeals last week reassured worried researchers that a controversial recent decision was not intended to bar most studies in that state involving children.

Universities and biomedical groups feared that language in the 16 August decision—involving a home lead paint cleanup study by the Kennedy Krieger Institute (KKI) associated with Johns Hopkins University—would outlaw studies involving "any risk" to children (*Science*, 28 September 2001, p. 2367). KKI filed a motion asking the court to reconsider. On 11 October the court denied the motion but stated that "by 'any risk' we meant any articulable risk beyond the minimal kind of risk that is inherent in any endeavor." Several groups that filed an amicus brief, including Hopkins and the Association of American Universities, say the clarification puts Maryland law back in accord with federal regulations allowing pediatric studies involving "minimal risk."

The court was not asked to reconsider its overall ruling, which found that the lead study was unethical. The case will now go to a trial court.



Weather from above. A weakening stratospheric vortex (red) can alter circulation down to the surface, bringing storms and cold weather farther south than usual.

sphere and reaching the surface as a weakening and diversion of the AO's westerly winds. Because it took a few weeks for a switch to get from the vortex to the AO, predicting a switch a week or two ahead looked possible.

Baldwin and Dunkerton have now taken a more detailed look at 42 years of vortex and AO wintertime behavior and found that the connection can be a persistent one. Once a major switch reaches the lower stratosphere, the vortex remains unusually weak or strong for an average of 60 days, which should let forecasters predict extremes in the underlying AO and the accompanying likelihood of weather extremes out as far as a month or two. Forecasters might, for example, warn that cold air outbreaks from the Arctic into midlatitudes would be three to four times more likely across Europe, Asia, and North America.

In separate, as-yet-unpublished analyses, Thompson, Baldwin, and Wallace find that major vortex and AO shifts affect surface temperatures about as much as El Niño does. In central Europe and most of North America, surface temperatures average 0.5° to 2°C cooler in the 60 days following the onset of an extremely weak vortex than in the same period following the onset of a strong vortex. The difference is 1.5° to 4°C for the high Eurasian Arctic. That compares with temperature differences between El Niño and its opposite, La Niña, of 1° to 3.5°C in higher latitudes. "The El Niño analogy is a good one," says Baldwin. "The magnitude of these [switches] could be very useful."

Researchers are generally impressed. The Baldwin and Dunkerton "analysis is very careful and very complete," says stratosphere meteorologist Karin Labitzke of the Free University Berlin. Predicting weather based on the work will be harder, as Baldwin and Dunkerton point out, because switches in the stratosphere and the AO sometimes occur independently, and no one understands the mechanics of the stratosphere-troposphere linkage when it does happen. Forecasters' computer models "must be able to predict where and when the effects of this interaction [between stratosphere and troposphere] will be manifested," says Edward O'Lenic, a long-range forecaster at the National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center in Camp Springs, Maryland. "This is a tall order and a challenge for modelers, but the payoff could be great."

Modelers are already trying to sort out how the stratosphere can influence the weather. The stratosphere might gain leverage on the troposphere through great globe-girdling atmospheric waves that rise into the stratosphere during winter. How the stratosphere and troposphere communicate will be of interest not only to long-range forecasters, but to climatologists as well. The same linkage may well be operating when volcanic debris, an inconstant sun, ozone depletion, or greenhouse gases alter stratospheric climate. Perhaps more than one forecasting nightmare could be eased by understanding stratospheric harbingers.

–RICHARD A. KERR

SOURCE: M. BALDWIN AND T. DUNKERTON/NWRA

VOLCANOLOGY

Vesuvius: A Threat Subsiding?

NAPLES, ITALY—People living in the shadow of Vesuvius, the volcano that so famously buried the Roman town of Pompeii, may be able to sleep a bit easier. New satellite data, some experts say, suggest that the small earthquakes that shake the region almost daily are not harbingers of an imminent eruption. Rather, they occur because the central part of the volcano's crater is sinking at a rate of several millimeters per year.

About 1 million Neapolitans might have to be evacuated if Vesuvius awakes from its 57-year-long slumber. Scientists and civil defense experts are bitterly divided over the adequacy of evacuation plans. There is no way of knowing when Vesuvius might erupt again, but rising magma beneath active volcanoes can produce tremors before an eruption.

To aid the debate, Riccardo Lanari and his colleagues at the Research Institute for Electromagnetism and Electronic Components in

ScienceScope

Special Breed A Japanese government committee charged with either privatizing or abolishing some 163 special public corporations (*Science*, 7 September, p. 1743) has let those doing research off the hook. Many of the public works agencies have drawn criticism from economic reformers because they are seen as inefficient. But in a 5 October report, the committee says that it is "impossible" to alter the status of research organs such as the Institute of Physical and Chemical Research (RIKEN), the Japan Marine Science and Technology Center, and the Japan Atomic Energy Research Institute because they fulfill national policy objectives and are too dependent on government funding. "Unlike many of the other special corporations, the research labs have no sources of income," says Shun-ichi Kobayashi, RIKEN's president.

Even so, there may be changes afoot. The committee wants to consolidate seven research funders, including the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science and the New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization, into one entity. Researchers strongly prefer to have multiple funding sources. And Kobayashi says he's heard that RIKEN's accelerator physics group, which operates its own particle accelerators, could be merged into the High Energy Accelerator Research Organization (KEK) in Tsukuba. The report gives few details on such changes, however, and Kobayashi laments that "we only know what we read in the newspapers."

Technology Czar? The White House is rumored to have chosen one of two top deputies to science adviser John Marburger as part of a reorganization of his office. Richard Russell, a longtime congressional aide who has been serving as staff director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy since last spring, will become OSTP's head of technology, Washington insiders say. Russell, who earned a bachelor's degree in biology from Yale University in 1988, worked for the Republican-led House Science Committee from 1996 to 2000. He is closely linked to efforts to kill the Department of Commerce's Advanced Technology Program, which funnels R&D funds to tech companies.

Russell may be part of a slimmed-down senior staff split between science and technology. Sources say that White House planners may eliminate two existing senior posts, overseeing the environment and national security–international affairs.

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