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News

Pharma stands up for research

By Patrick Walter

Anti-vivisectionists' confidence that they can change the landscape of European medical research by getting governments to ban primate research is misplaced, say pharmaceutical industry representatives.

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News

Breast cancer drug is made available on the NHS

The cancer drug Herceptin is to be made available on the NHS for women with early stage breast cancer. Draft guidance from the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) came two weeks after the drug received its European licence.

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News

Nature trial nurtures open peer review

By Lisa Richards

Scientific publishing may never be the same again: Nature magazine is looking into the possibility of posting submitted research papers on the internet for public scrutiny. An initial trial will last three months.

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News

Big pharma still hungry for little biotech companies

By Emma Dorey

The trend for snapping up biotech companies continued this month when Swiss drug giant Novartis offered to buy UK superbug firm NeuTec Pharma for £305m (\$562m) in cash. NeuTec specialises in hospital anti-infectives. At £10.50 a share, the price is more than double NeuTec's pre-offer stock price.

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News

Sheffield first

Nobel prize winner Harry Kroto unveiled the world's first 'giant buckyball' sculpture outside the Kroto Research Institute at the University of Sheffield this month.

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[View Full Article](#)**19 June 2006 - Issue No 12 - Page 5** **News**

Prozac for children

The antidepressant Prozac (fluoxetine) could soon be prescribed for children as young as eight.

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Cervical cancer prevention

Merck's Gardasil, the first vaccine to prevent cervical cancer, has been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration.

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MMR scare doctor charged

Andrew Wakefield, the doctor who sparked an international scare over the safety of the MMR vaccine is to be charged with serious professional misconduct by the UK General Medical Council, according to UK newspaper The Independent.

[View Full Article](#)**19 June 2006 - Issue No 12 - Page 6** **News**

First transgenic drug

The first biotech drug produced in transgenic animals could soon be approved. The European Medicines Agency (EMA) has adopted a positive opinion of Genzyme Europe's anticlotting drug ATryn.

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Thorium could replace uranium as nuclear fuel

By Des Owen

Proponents of thorium as an alternative fuel say it could be the answer to many concerns over nuclear power. Thorium is three times more abundant, produces waste that is stored for a fraction of the time of uranium waste, and presents an opportunity to decommission nuclear weapons efficiently.

[View Full Article](#)**19 June 2006 - Issue No 12 - Page 6** **News**

Melatonin: a grape excuse to hit the bottle

By Marina Murphy

There is now yet another reason to drink more wine. Scientists in Italy say they have discovered that grape varieties used to make some of the most popular red wines contain melatonin, the 'sleep hormone' previously thought to be produced only by mammals.

[View Full Article](#)**19 June 2006 - Issue No 12 - Page 7** **News**

Pill lowers risk of losing vision

By Marina Murphy

The first pill for diabetic retinopathy, a sight-stealing complication of diabetes, could soon be available.

[View Full Article](#)**19 June 2006 - Issue No 12 - Page 7** **News****Flexible ceramic household wallpaper on a roll**

By Marina Murphy

A ceramic wallpaper that can be applied to shower units, kitchens or just about anywhere has been developed by scientists in Germany.

[View Full Article](#)**19 June 2006 - Issue No 12 - Page 8** **News****Biofuels platform launch**

The European association for bioindustries, EuropaBio, has welcomed the launch of the Biofuels Technology Platform by the European Commission. The new platform will provide and implement a common European vision and strategy for the production of biofuels.

[View Full Article](#)**19 June 2006 - Issue No 12 - Page 8** **News****Ineos takes biofuels to UK**

Ineos Enterprises is to make a major investment in biofuels in the UK at its site in Grangemouth, Scotland. Although the heart of the project will be a biodiesel facility, which should provide a secure supply for the Ineos Refining operations on completion in 2008, it could also include a bioethanol plant.

[View Full Article](#)**19 June 2006 - Issue No 12 - Page 8** **News****Corn feedstock first**

AB Bioenergy France — in which Abengoa Bioenergy, part of the Spanish sustainable development group, has a 56% share — has begun construction of a e180m (\$227m), 200 000t/year bioethanol facility in Lacq, southern France.

[View Full Article](#)**19 June 2006 - Issue No 12 - Page 8** **News****Turning wine into biofuels**

The EU has opened tenders to sell off French and Italian wine surpluses to produce biofuels or industrial alcohols at a cost of e131m (\$165m), according to news agency Reuters.

[View Full Article](#)**19 June 2006 - Issue No 12 - Page 8** **News****GSK offers \$15bn for healthcare division**

By Emma Dorey

Pharmaceutical giant Glaxo-SmithKline (GSK) has reportedly offered about \$15bn to buy Pfizer's consumer healthcare division. The division, which includes over-the-counter products such as the mouthwash Listerine, some Nicorette nicotine-replacement products and cold remedy Sudafed, generated revenues of \$3.9bn in 2005. Initial bids for the division closed on 6 June.

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Small sewage plants pose river risk

By Marina Murphy

Phosphorus stripping should be extended to small sewage plants as well as larger treatment works, to help prevent the eutrophication of UK rivers, according to scientists.

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News

New sector is thriving but greater regulation needed

By Neil Eisberg

Environmental protection measures have created a new UK technology industry worth £25bn (\$46bn) and created around 400 000 jobs. But this progress is in danger of being eroded if the government does not recognise the true cost of environmental issues.

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News

Bayer and Merck meet head on

By Neil Eisberg

The expected completion of German life sciences major Bayer's tender offer for Berlin-based German pharmaceutical company Schering has been thrown into doubt by the strong re-emergence of Merck as a possible buyer (C&I 2006, 7, 9).

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News

Funding bridges gap

New funding has been set up in the UK to overcome the so-called 'valley of death', or funding gap, identified recently by David King, the UK government's chief scientific adviser (C&I 2006, 11, 8). Government agency the Small Business Service has funded two new Enterprise Capital Funds (ECFs) in order to aid high tech businesses.

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News

Drug trials mandatory in EU

New EU legislation means that drug companies finally have the incentive to test their drugs on children. About half the drugs currently available have not gone through paediatric testing, which means they cannot be used on children.

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News

Is pharma finally losing weight?

By Marina Murphy

The expected green light from Brussels for Sanofi-Aventis's anti-obesity drug rimonabant within the next few weeks is forecast to transform the traditionally small obesity market into a gold mine. But it remains to be seen whether the hype surrounding this drug is justified, and whether it can really succeed where so many others have failed.

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Business

Business Digest

By Neil Eisberg

Swiss fine chemicals and biotech company **Lonza** is selling its holding in LOFO High Tech Film (Weil am Rhein, Germany) to **Shinkong Synthetic Fibers**, headquartered in Taipei, Taiwan, for an undisclosed sum. The deal is expected to be closed by the end of June.

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News

The power of addiction

By Emma Dorey

Not too long ago, being addicted to drugs — such as alcohol, nicotine, cocaine or opioids — was considered a moral failing or the result of a weak will. It is now increasingly recognised as a complex chronic disease with multiple underlying causes.

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Comment

Sustainable growth strategy key to future

By Peter Reineck

Are crops (biorenewables) viable alternative sources of platform chemicals? That was the question before the recent SCI seminar (C&I 2006, 7, 5), but more questions are worth asking about sustainable resources.

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Patents

A head start

A motorbike helmet that tells you when its time to bin it is being developed by US company Peltor. Once your helmet's useful life has ended, a message appears on it telling you to dispose of it.

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Patents

Bone quality scanner

A scanning device that can determine the quality and elasticity of bones sounds more Star Trek than National Health Service. But researchers from the University of Texas have developed an ultrasound-based device that could identify those at risk of osteoporosis and monitor their treatment.

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Patents

The sweetest thing

High-fructose corn syrup forms the basis of the flavour of most soft drinks. It is a thick, sugary liquid made by enzymatically converting glucose to fructose. A new process has been developed that results in the same great flavours but more cheaply and with fewer calories.

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Patents

Boosting insect control

Insect control is vital to prevent the transmission of

diseases such as malaria, which kills an estimated one million people annually. Insect coils use a spring-shaped dough of slow burning material combined with an insecticide to control insects in enclosed spaces.

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19 June 2006 - Issue No 12 - Page 18 **Features**

Winning formula

By Phil Allen

For many years the chemical and plastics industry has fretted over the inevitability of commoditisation. In the past five years, the challenges of increasing competition from labour and raw material-advantaged producers, and the pressures of increasing raw-materials costs, have turned up the heat significantly. How can the western chemical industry regain a strong competitive foothold?

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19 June 2006 - Issue No 12 - Page 20 **Features**

Sunlight express

By Rob Winder

As summer finally arrives in Europe and the bright sunshine requires the use of sunglasses to protect the eyes from damage caused by UV radiation, those of us that need to wear corrective spectacles have to address the age-old problem of whether to take our standard glasses as well as a pair of prescription sunglasses with us when we go out.

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19 June 2006 - Issue No 12 - Page 22 **Features**

A flexible friend

By Jon Evans

Many readers of this article are probably already gaining a major medical benefit from hydrogels. This is because these highly absorbent polymer networks form the basis for 'soft' contact lenses. The flexibility and high water-content of hydrogel lenses ensure that they are far less irritating to the eye than older 'hard' varieties, while the latest generation of lenses based on silicone hydrogels can be worn even when asleep.

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19 June 2006 - Issue No 12 - Page 24 **Reviews**

Solutions to pollution

As a concerned scientist and honorary lecturer in environmental studies, I am interested in sustainable development and pollution prevention. Like most people, I am aware that growing economic developments are in conflict with the Earth's ecosystems. The general view is that we need to curb economic activities to restore some of the serious damage to the environment. A major challenge to our generation is to reverse trends in environmental degradation before it results in long-term economic decline.

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19 June 2006 - Issue No 12 - Page 26 **Reviews**

Reviewing the past

The novelist Henry James once observed that historians always want more documents than they can really use; to that end historians never tire of searching through guides to books, documents and articles. In 1985, under Russell's editorship, the historical group of the RSC published

Recent developments in the history of chemistry in the style of the Annual reports of the chemical society. Newcomers to the history of chemistry, as well as chemist historians and historians of science were well served by it.

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Highlights

Organometallic chemistry

By Kevin Burgess, Texas A&M

Scriban and Glueck pointed out (J Am Chem Soc 2006, 128, 2788) that there are few asymmetric syntheses of phosphine ligands, they then reveal an ingenious one of their own. The DUPHOS complex 1 can be P-alkylated by activated electrophiles and, when it is, there is induction at the phosphorus. This process generates a phosphine complex, from which the chiral phosphine can be displaced via excess phosphide. Remarkably, this process occurs faster than direct alkylation of the free phosphide by the electrophile, so the process becomes catalytic (Reaction 1). Note the base in this process; alkali metal salts of trimethylsiloxide can sometimes have highly desirable properties; we predict it will emerge as a special reagent.

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Highlights

Organic chemistry

By G Richard Stephenson, University of East Anglia, Norwich

Alkene metathesis has come back into the news, lately, with the publication in Angewandte Chemie of Yves Chauvin's Nobel lecture (Angew Chem Int Ed 2006, 45, 3741). Since the early days of this topic, the organic chemistry community has largely settled on a few versatile and reliable catalyst systems, but selectivity in synthetic applications remains an important issue. In work towards the cylindricine B pyridoquinoline alkaloids, Weinreb's group have described (W Chao, Y Mahajan & S Weinreb, Tetrahedron Lett 2006, 47, 3815) an example which generates a cyclic alkenyl chloride (1) without interference from the halogen substitution on the carbenoid intermediates.

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People

Movers & Shakers

Bernward Garthoff, Hans Kast, Andrea Rappagliosi, Jack Huttner, Aisling Burnand, Philippe Archinard, Greg Lewin, John Archer, Trevor Evans, Ralf Blauth, William Rohn, Natacha Deschamps-Smith, Jeremy Way, Joseph Colleluori.

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