

SPOTTED

Facebook funds; trials on trial; meeting of minds

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23 SEPTEMBER 2016

WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 19TH

Facebook funds

Facebook founder **Mark Zuckerberg** and his pediatrician wife, **Priscilla Chan**, want to find treatments for every disease in their daughter's lifetime.

The couple made their ambitious pledge Wednesday. They plan to spend \$3 billion over 10 years to cure and manage maladies such as cancer and neurological disease.

"We believe that the future we all want for our children is possible," Chan said in a speech at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), that was **livestreamed on Facebook**.

Neuroscientist **Cori Bargmann** will lead the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative while maintaining her current post as professor at Rockefeller University in New York.

Chan and Zuckerberg have earmarked \$600 million for the creation of an independent research center at UCSF, called Biohub. The center will house research aimed at developing tools to measure and treat disease.

Chan and Zuckerberg welcomed a daughter, Max, last December. At the time, they pledged to **donate 99 percent of their Facebook shares** — worth about \$45 billion — to charity.

SOURCES:

Facebook / 21 Sep 2016

Chan Zuckerberg Initiative announcement

<https://www.facebook.com/zuck/videos/10103120865133051/?pnref=story>

Trials on trial

The U.S. government is cracking down on clinical trials that go unreported.

New rules announced last Friday require researchers to **publicly share the results of their trials** or face fines of up to \$10,000, according to *STAT*. Researchers who receive funds from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) could lose their cash flow until they comply.

“We are serious about this,” NIH Director **Francis Collins** told *STAT*. “It’s hard to herd cats, but you can move their food, or take their food away.”

Nearly half of all pediatric trials **go unfinished or unpublished**, according to a study published last month in *Pediatrics*. As a result, researchers waste time and money repeating work that has already been done. Worse, families may spend countless hours participating in studies that never see the light of day.

“This is about maintaining the trust that we have with participants in clinical trials,” Collins said. “If we fail to live up to that expectation, then that is an ethical failure.”

SOURCES:

STAT / 16 Sep 2016

New federal rules target woeful public reporting of clinical trial results

<https://www.statnews.com/2016/09/16/clinical-trials-reporting-rules/>**Pediatrics** / 04 Aug 2016

Discontinuation and nonpublication of randomized clinical trials conducted in children

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2016/08/02/peds.2016-0223>

Meeting of minds

About 400 scientists, ethicists, policy makers and funders from around the world met in Manhattan on Monday for an epic brainstorm. The group’s goal is to **coordinate efforts to understand the brain** through a new project called the International Brain Initiative. And although details of the project are up in the air, enthusiasm abounds.

“This could be historic,” **Rafael Yuste**, professor of neuroscience at Columbia University, told *Science*. “I could imagine out of this meeting that groups of people could get together and start international collaborations the way the astronomers and the physicists have been doing for decades.”

Thomas Shannon, U.S. under secretary of state for political affairs, announced the initiative

Monday at the United Nations General Assembly, but the idea has been in the works for a while. Central to the project is sharing **data across labs and borders**.

“What has happened here is magnificent,” **Rodolfo Llinás**, professor at New York University, told *Science*. “Never before in neuroscience have I seen so much unity in such a glorious purpose.”

SOURCES:

Science / 20 Sep 2016

Big dreams emerge for big brain science projects

<http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2016/09/big-dreams-emerge-big-brain-science-projects>

Bravo, ECHO

On Wednesday, the NIH announced a **\$157 million investment** in a study aimed at **identifying environmental contributors to autism** and other childhood conditions.

The study, dubbed ECHO for **Environmental influences on Child Health Outcomes**, is slated to follow more than 50,000 children. The NIH funds will go toward recruiting children and supporting studies that are already tracking child development.

ECHO replaces the National Children’s Study, which folded in 2014 after costs topped \$1.3 billion.

SOURCES:

National Institutes of Health / 21 Sep 2016

NIH awards more than \$150 million for research on environmental influences on child health

<https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/nih-awards-more-150-million-research-environmental-influences-child-health>

All things unequal

There has been much discussion about gender inequality in science. For instance, **the ratio of female department heads** at top medical schools to mustachioed ones is 0.72 — a dismal statistic given the relative rarity of mustaches these days.

Racial inequality is also a hot topic: Minority researchers are **less likely to win an NIH grant** than their white counterparts.

This week, *Nature* explored a third type of inequality in science: income inequality.

In a special issue, *Nature* showed **income inequality is on the rise** and is a growing concern among young scientists. At the University of California, 29 medical researchers take home more than \$1 million annually, and at least 10 others make upwards of \$400,000 each. At the same time, thousands of postdocs earn less than \$50,000 a year.

The series also highlights how **income inequality hurts science**, with essays about its effects in eight countries.

SOURCES:

Nature / 21 Sep 2016

Science and inequality

<http://www.nature.com/news/science-and-inequality-1.20652>

Job news

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