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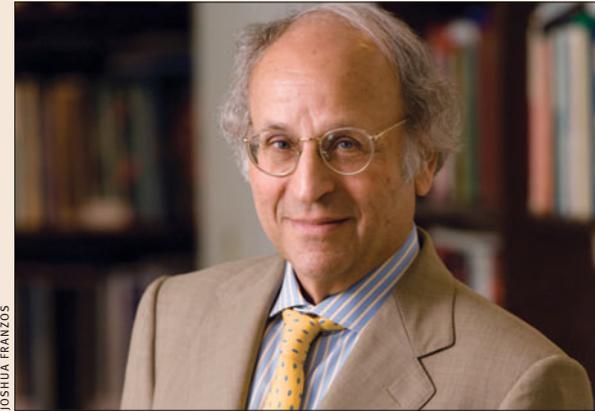
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Pitt med alumnus Gordon Sun (MD '06), a Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholar at the University of Michigan, details in an August *New England Journal of Medicine* paper how emerging Asian powers are ramping up national funding for medical research and development; they are poised to fill the void being created by contracting federal U.S. funding. The NIH's proposed FY 2013 budget continues the 10-year failure to match the increasing cost and opportunities of medical research. Unless Congress changes its course, the debt reduction "sequestration" would lead to the closure of many good labs and the end of many careers, especially those of young investigators.

JOSHUA FRANZOS



Of course, China, India, South Korea, et al. have some catching up to do. The United States has held a premier position in medical research for more than half a century; it certainly won't be outpaced overnight. But perhaps the words "catching up" and "outpace" evoke the wrong images. Science is not a horse race—it's a global collaboration. As others invest in acquiring knowledge, we all benefit. Yet I admit that I'd prefer that our country also continue to value medical research as an engine for innovative care and economic growth. Our federal investment in medical research is less than 1 percent of our GDP; the Asian powers invest 2 to 5 percent, with as much as a 67 percent increase, year to year. Already this is leading to the transfer of talent and resources from our shores. Our nation is likely to suffer a loss of jobs, access to experimental treatments, and other, more difficult to measure, windfalls that accompany a commitment to inquiry and innovation.

Still, this is an exciting time here at home. Our medical school's extraordinary rise in prominence continues. Yet another stellar class has joined us this August; we also welcomed some of China's best and brightest to our campus—and we are pleased to have taken this step in global collaboration. These young people will be working with our faculty as the first group to pursue a new, required, two-year biomedical research component of the medical school curriculum of Tsinghua University ("the MIT of China"). Yigong Shi, dean at Tsinghua (and a renowned structural biologist lured back to China from Princeton), has partnered with us so that Tsinghua students will be immersed in Western research culture and the critical thinking it promotes—as he was during his own U.S. graduate training. While Chinese students often gain a deep and impressive understanding of their subjects, their academic tradition does not encourage them to challenge scientific dogma.

When considering such cultural and philosophic nuances, I was introduced to this passage penned by an 8th-century Taoist poet: *Wild geese fly across the long sky above./Their image is reflected upon the chilly water below./The geese do not mean to cast their image on the water;/Nor does the water mean to hold the image of the geese.* Although I confess to a limited knowledge of classical Chinese poetic form, I think that the reflection of geese can be understood as a metaphor for the often serendipitous nature of scientific observation and the creativity inherent in how we capture the accidental observation.

I look forward to the serendipity and creativity ahead. And to watching our students soar—whether they started their journeys by flying across the long sky from Beijing or bus-ing it on the 61B from Braddock.

Arthur S. Levine, MD
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