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 Medical School.

This magazine is intended to present advances in  
 medicine and biotechnology for general informational  
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**Throughout his campaign**, Barack Obama spoke passionately about his commitment to science and technology. Even as the U.S. economy sputtered, Obama stayed on message, advocating a comprehensive scientific agenda that included doubling federal spending on basic research during the next decade, lifting restrictions on embryonic-stem-cell studies and investing heavily in health information technology.

Now, as president, Obama faces a deepening financial crisis, and many competing priorities—stimulating the economy, paying for two wars, fighting global warming—threaten to push biomedical research to the back burner. Still, expectations run high in a research community that has had little to cheer in recent years.

Science, in fact, can play a leading role in reversing our nation's economic meltdown, and biomedical research must be part of any economic stimulus package. Last summer Families USA, a national health care consumer group, published a report showing that the nearly \$23 billion in research grants and contracts the National Institutes of Health awarded in 2007 generated 350,000 jobs, more than \$18 billion in wages and some \$50 billion in business activity.

And 2007 wasn't even a good year for NIH funding, which, adjusted for inflation, has dropped by almost 13% in the last five years. That decline followed a golden age, from 1998 to 2003, during which the NIH budget doubled, research flourished, laboratories expanded, knowledge exploded, bright young thinkers chose careers in science, and the United States was the hands-down leader in biomedical progress.

Now we have an opportunity to reinvigorate our national focus on scientific research. There are bold projects under way and many others awaiting support. In this issue of *Proto*, for example, we consider how the worm *C. elegans*, long a research workhorse, could revolutionize drug development; we explore what physicians may learn by studying rare individuals who, though infected with HIV, never develop AIDS; and we investigate the promise of stem cells for restoring brains ravaged by disease. All of this work is in very early stages, and further progress, as well as gains against cancer, diabetes and heart disease, will require adequate, reliable funding.

If our new president can deliver on his promises to invest in such research, we may begin to see how harnessing the extraordinary power of science and technology can help heal not only the human body and mind but also the ailing U.S. economy.

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