

Preventing innovation

The problem with innovation today is that it focuses on forward rather than lateral thinking (Profit and PR kill off anything that's new, 17 August). Someone from 1950 visiting the world of 2012 may not be as surprised by our progression with technological breakthroughs as with our failure to spread existing technology throughout the world. William Gibson observed that "the future is already here – it's just not evenly distributed" and he was right.

We have an obsession with the new that blinds us to the immense progress we have already made. It is true that we have not found a cure for cancer but we have found the cure for diarrhoea and the way to stop children dying from it is not to develop new drugs, but to creatively engineer and fund the spread of the ones we already have.

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