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Letters

Bothersome statements

I was bothered by two statements made in
"Shrinking the insanity defense" (SN: 1/29/83, p.
68).

First, it seems natural, after the embarrass-
ment it suffered due to the conflicting testi-
mony given by psychiatrists in the John
Hinckley case, that the American Psychiatric
Association should issue a statement to its
members to limit themselves to expressing
medical opinions in future cases and not to give
an opinion concerning "whether a defendant
was able to distinguish right from wrong, ap-
preciate the criminality of his behavior, or con-
trol his behavior." But if these issues "cannot be
answered by behavioral science," how can one
expect "regular people" on a jury to reply?
Shouldn't they at least be entitled to hear all the
"expert" medical opinions and other concomi-
tant opinions that are available? Appropriate
complex decisions involving someone's life
cannot be made with inadequate information.

Second, I do agree with the APA that hospital

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Cover: The injectable contraceptive Depo-Provera can prevent pregnancy for at least three months with each shot. But animal and human trials of the drug have failed to quiet fears that it causes cancer and birth defects in humans. Now the Food and Drug Administration must decide if the evidence justifies its sale to women in the United States. (Photograph by Marty Katz)



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psychiatrists should not have to play the roles of jailor and judge, too, to the criminally — and violent — insane. However, contrary to what Leonard Rubenstein says, a tightening in the release procedures from hospital for these criminal patients would shift the burden of proof of their future dangerousness from hospital psychiatrists, *not* to the patients, surely, but to their parole boards, which would continue to have the benefit of medical opinion in making release decisions.

Joan Brittain
New York, N.Y.

It's not new

That clouds may be seeded by airplanes ("Super-seeder?" SN: 11/20/82, p. 333) is hardly news to observational astronomers! I myself have observed a perfectly clear sky evolve to become completely overcast by jet contrails that not only persist but *grow*. This seems to require certain atmospheric conditions and usually occurs during cold weather after the passage of a frontal system.

Daniel B. Caton
Boone, N.C.

Editor's note:

Several lines were inadvertently dropped from the final paragraph of last week's story "Zapping Pain: Hot Prospects for the Cold Laser" (p. 100). According to Joseph Kleinkort, cold lasers are in use at the Wilfordhall Air Force medical center and Randolph Air Force Base in San Antonio, and at the Andrews Air Force Base and the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in the Washington, D.C., area.

One further note. Although FDA knows of no institution other than the Harvard Medical School that has the investigational-device exemption (IDE) necessary to legally study the use of cold lasers on humans, there may be others. Unless an institution volunteers the information, FDA will not know whether the sponsor of a research study has been granted an IDE by its institutional-review board.

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