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Letters

Chelation: Check out the claims

As a chelation patient and a practicing scientist, I was quite bewildered to read "Chelation Therapists: Charlatans or Saviors?" (SN: 3/2/85, p. 138). First, as a patient, I noticed that you failed to mention a number of direct results of chelation therapy that can be measured directly and are easily documented. These include, in my own case, substantial drops in blood pressure, both short-range (pre- to post-treatment) and long-range (from beginning to end of series of treatments), and normal flow in arteries more than half clogged prior to treatment, which is directly proved by comparing pre- and post-treatment thermography results.

Second, as a scientist in a different discipline (physics), I am astonished by the seeming inability or unwillingness of both proponents and opponents of chelation therapy to conduct a definitive experiment that would, once and for all, either prove its validity or lay it to rest. While the proponents of chelation claim that small-sample studies — which, unfortunately, are not statistically significant — have been per-

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Cover: Alga growth provides the basis for a new method of sea farming. The algae are currently fed to edible crabs and snails, but they may later be developed as food additives or foods in their own right.



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formed, it is not clear why a double-blind study involving up to 200 patients cannot be carried out. Such a test would not harm anybody (preliminary tests would disqualify anybody with kidney problems) and could be carried out on volunteer groups. The value of such a definitive experiment would be enormous. If chelation therapy is valid, it ought to be made available to anybody who needs it. If it is a hoax, scientific integrity requires that we expose it beyond any reasonable doubt.

Nathan Jacobi
Pasadena, Calif.

Genetic engineering: 'Go for it'

Fifteen months ago I began research on my college thesis, which addressed, in part, genetic engineering attempts in the 1970s and 1980s. I still have the articles I used in writing my paper, and they are almost perfect artifacts of the type of information still being reported in current articles ("Frost-free bacteria lawsuit," SN: 3/2/85, p. 135).

Hey, NIH, Jeremy Rifkin, University of California scientists—I finished my essay; I have read

the opposing sides to the issue; I am waiting to see if the "philosophical opposition to the proposed technologies" that I wrote about has any validity in this frost-free issue. Go for it! Release the bacteria in a carefully controlled environment, and let us move on to other concerns with the technology.

Adam Stuart
Geneva, N.Y.

Coat of many flavors

In the article on minimal surfaces ("Three Bites in a Doughnut," SN: 3/16/85, p. 168), is the word "sugarcoated" an embedded joke, or has it topological significance? That is, would an uncoated doughnut, or one coated with something other than sugar, not provide the required analogy?

Phyllis Cohen
New York, N.Y.

Depending on your taste, a chocolate-covered or honey-dipped doughnut would have worked just as well. The analogy was meant to emphasize that the surface rather than the bulk of the doughnut was involved here. —I. Peterson

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