

# SCIENCE NEWS®

The Weekly Newsmagazine of Science

A Science Service Publication  
Volume 127, No. 14, April 6, 1985

|                                 |                                     |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| E. G. Sherburne Jr.             | Publisher                           |
| Joel Greenberg                  | Editor                              |
| Dietrick E. Thomsen             | Senior Editor/<br>Physical Sciences |
| Laurie Jackson Phillips         | Managing Editor                     |
| Wendy McCarren                  | Production/Design<br>Director       |
| Bruce Bower                     | Behavioral Sciences                 |
| Joanne Silberner                | Biomedicine                         |
| Stefi Weisburd                  | Earth Sciences                      |
| Julie Ann Miller                | Life Sciences                       |
| Janet Raloff,<br>Ivars Peterson | Policy/Technology                   |
| Jonathan Eberhart               | Space Sciences                      |
| Susan Welch                     | Assistant to<br>the Editor          |
| Dawn D. Bennett                 | Science Writer Intern               |
| Jane M. Livermore               | Books                               |
| Donald R. Harless               | Business Manager                    |

Scherago Associates Advertising  
Fred Dieffenbach, Sales Director  
1515 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10036

Copyright © 1985 by Science Service, Inc.,  
Editorial and Business Offices,  
1719 N St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.  
Republication of any portion of SCIENCE NEWS  
without written permission of the publisher is  
prohibited.

Subscription Department  
231 West Center Street, Marion, Ohio 43305

Subscription rate: 1 yr., \$27.50; 2 yrs., \$47.50;  
3 yrs., \$67.00. (Foreign postage \$5.00 additional per  
year.) Change of address: Four to six weeks' notice  
is required. Please state exactly how magazine  
is to be addressed. Include zip code. For new  
subscriptions only call (1) 800-247-2160. Printed in  
U.S.A. Second class postage paid at Washington,  
D.C. Title registered as trademark U.S. and  
Canadian Patent Offices. Published every Saturday  
by SCIENCE SERVICE, Inc. 1719 N St., N.W.,  
Washington, D.C. 20036 (202-785-2255)  
ISSN 0036-8423

## 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-

## This Week

- 212 Chasing the Earth's Magnetic Field
- 212 When quasars have supernovas
- 213 Moving closer to a vaccine for cancer
- 213 Perils of fat: Cancer role assayed
- 214 Chronic stress still lingers near TMI
- 214 Climate conspires against oxygen and oysters
- 215 Electron tunneling for ultrafine detail
- 215 Anemia: A defense against cancer?

## Research Notes

- 216 Biomedicine
- 217 Physics
- 217 Technology

## Articles

- 219 Optical Fiber Sensors: Just Around the Corner
- 220 Diet for a Blue Planet

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.



## Departments

- 211 Letters

**Science Service** Institution for the public understanding of science founded 1921; a nonprofit corporation.  
**Board of Trustees**—*President*, Glenn T. Seaborg; *Vice President*, Gerald F. Tape; *Treasurer*, Willis Harlow Shapley; *Secretary*, Julius Duscha; *Joseph W. Berg Jr.*; *Edward Bliss Jr.*; *Bowen C. Dees*; *David A. Goslin*; *Milton Harris*; *Hilleary F. Hoskinson*; *O. W. Riegel*; *H. Guyford Stever*; *John Troan*; *Deborah P. Wolfe*.  
**Director**: E. G. Sherburne Jr.; **Assistant Director**: Dorothy Schriver; **Business Manager**: Donald R. Harless.

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

APRIL 6, 1985

211