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Letters

Depression, immunity and cancer

Steven J. Schleifer asks whether depression leads to changes in immunity or altered immunity is a trait of depressives ("Severe Depression Depresses Immunity," SN: 2/16/85, p. 100). When my father became ill with cancer for the second time in August 1982, and it became clear he would die, my mother became severely depressed; by June 1983 she was dead of cancer also. To me this was particularly significant because she had had a double radical mastectomy in 1976, and had been clear of cancer since that date, two years in excess of the five-year milestone. She could not see any reason to live without my Dad, and by November 1982, three months after Dad's diagnosis, her breast cancer had already reappeared.

Long before reading B. Bower's article, I had concluded that her immune system had kept the disease in check without treatment for seven years, but that her depression broke

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Cover: A new museum exhibit has opened in New York to commemorate S. Harmsted Chubb, who introduced anatomical accuracy into the preparation of museum skeletons. Chubb went to great lengths to determine posture in motion—here, early in the century, he dangles precariously from the roof of the American Museum of Natural History to photograph a racehorse speeding below. (Photo courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History)



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down her immunities, resulting in her death.

*Edmund T. Anderson IV
Midland, Tex.*

Fat findings no surprise

The idea that a high-fat diet causes obesity faster than a low-fat diet with the same caloric content ("Fat rats have rich diet to blame," SN: 3/9/85, p. 153) is not surprising to anyone who has tried to lose weight. Nor should it be surprising from an evolutionary viewpoint. Mammals first began to appear when reptiles had already filled most of the ecological niches available. Food was scarce, or at least the object of strong competition, for those first mammals. It would be a great advantage if fat could be stored more efficiently for warmth and energy when it was plentiful. This would sustain these creatures through the "lean" times when fat was available.

*Wayne Wyrick
Oklahoma City, Okla.*

What price success?

M.D. Conley's assertion that "the future for nuclear power clearly lies in the hands of waste disposal researchers" (Letters, SN: 3/9/85, p. 147) cannot go unchallenged. It is not enough that this method of power generation may someday have a proven way to dispose of its garbage. It must also be economically viable.

As energy expert Amory Lovins and others have often pointed out, new power plants of various types must economically compete with efficiency improvements, not just with each other. Energy users simply will not buy more electricity from any source than they can afford to, and as power costs keep escalating, efficiency improvements will become better and better buys.

Perhaps nuclear power will succeed someday — at bringing us abundant power we will not need, at prices we will not pay. What then?

*David Spicer
Canton, N.C.*

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