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Letters

Mono and cancer

Joanne Silberner's article on the link between cancer and viruses ("Cancer Virus Redux," SN: 6/1/85, p. 346) raises a question of concern to myself and millions of others who have suffered from mononucleosis. Does our exposure to this virus make us susceptible to cancer? Are any studies in progress to answer this question, or are there precautionary measures we should take?

David H. Hight
St. Albans, W.Va.

With Epstein-Barr virus nearly ubiquitous and the two cancers to which it has been linked extremely rare, there is little cause for concern. Says Thomas Quinn, a specialist in infectious diseases at Johns Hopkins Medical School in Baltimore, "Epstein-Barr virus is a very common virus that has infected a majority of our population. The probability of developing cancer after

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Cover: One didn't have to live in Times Beach, Mo., or spend a tour of duty in Vietnam to have been exposed to dioxins and furans. New research suggests that all residents of industrialized nations today carry a low-level body burden of these toxic chemicals. (Photo: © Harold M. Lambert)



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infectious mononucleosis is extremely remote and highly unlikely. Though it has been linked to cancer, cancer is not considered a likely sequela.

— J. Silberner

In the ear of the beholder

The use of sound as one method of transmitting scientific data is an interesting and worthwhile pursuit ("The Sound of Data," SN: 6/1/85, p. 348). As this line of research continues, however, I must caution those involved to avoid such subjective biases as "these chords almost always jar the ear." Such cultural (i.e., 19th-century European tonality) biases will only hinder the use of these sounds as objective representations of data. For example, the chord representing glacial acetic acid does not exhibit any specific characteristic by itself; it can be subjectively compared to other chords by the listener on a continuum of consonance and dissonance.

Also, despite our culture's recent reliance upon the equal-tempered chromatic tuning sys-

tem, I believe that the conversion of numerical data directly into frequencies will provide a more accurate representation of the data in the aural realm. In addition, the musical relationship that exists between any set of frequencies can serve as its own reference and standard for future comparisons; and the recognition of these relationships is a learned response. As all aural relationships need to be learned, it only makes sense that the accurate frequencies be used when representing data.

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