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Letters

'Mystified' by invention contentions

"Bright Ideas That Still Shine" (SN: 8/9/86, p. 92) contains an inaccuracy that may lead readers to the wrong conclusion that the development of an electric device for the acceleration of orthodontic tooth movement is based upon clinical evidence derived from a study on human subjects: "In the following year, clinical trials involving 60 female patients confirmed that the method doubles the speed of tooth movement in humans." Those trials, conducted in 1982 under our leadership as principal investigators at the University of Pennsylvania, were indeed planned for 60 patients, but were conducted on a group of four patients as an initial step prior to the major study. However, the major study was never conducted because the initial study revealed

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- 250 The Cordell Bank Rediscovered

Cover: California's Cordell Bank is a main attraction for sea life, including this white-plumed anemone and red sea star. The bank has also been in the sonar limelight, posing for some of the most detailed seafloor mapping ever produced. (Photo: Cordell Bank Expeditions)



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tissue irritation under the positive electrode. Upon reporting the tissue damage to the University of Pennsylvania Committee on Experiments Involving Human Subjects, we were ordered to cease any further clinical trials.

Furthermore, your article indicated that Penn-Med Technology President Nathaniel Lieb says the newly developed "nonirritating electrode" is "almost ready for clinical testing again." We are somewhat mystified by this statement. Our own plan for clinical trials in human patients was originally based upon earlier experiments in animals, which had demonstrated the biological and clinical effects of the electrical device. The results of our research effort were published in a number of scientific journals. In contrast, we have not seen any reports of work that demonstrate the efficiency of the modified electrodes in animals. Since we believe that that is

a proper precursor for clinical trials on humans, the statement about being "almost ready" appears to be premature.

Finally, we must express our regret that "... the original inventors [are] no longer involved." Our noninvolvement was an inevitable consequence of interactive difficulties, but our interest in our baby is keen and current.

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