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Letters

Anesthetic action

"Putting the squeeze on anesthetics" (SN: 2/20/88, p.126) took me back 20 years to the time I spent in neurophysiology research. At that time, membrane physiology and channel activity studies seemed to be in vogue, while reports on studies of neurotransmitters and their release and receptor sites were few and far between.

Since no mention is made of mechanisms directly involving neurotransmitters in your article, I am left with the assumption that the simpler mechanism of travel along the axon, followed by some interaction with the neurotransmitter, is being ignored. It seems reasonable that a weak bond to the transmitter itself, to the release site (interfering with release) or to the receptor site (interfering

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Cover: Modern Australia is home to a menagerie of strange creatures: platypuses, spiny anteaters, wombats and Tasmanian devils, to name a few. But as a new fossil exhibit shows, an even greater variety of exotic creatures roamed the continent in the distant past, thanks to Australia's unusual geologic history. Shown on the cover is *Platypterygius australis*, a 22-foot-long ichthyosaur ("fish lizard"), swimming in a shallow sea that flooded much of Australia during part of the Cretaceous period. (Painting: Frank Knight)

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with transmitting the pain signal) might be the mechanism of blocking pain. Such a bond might well be easily broken under pressure, while not interfering with normal biological activity.

To validate this theory would not require use of high-pressure infrared spectrophotometry; simple radioautomicrographs might do. But observing this in a living system certainly would be advantageous.

*Don Van Meter
Maplewood, Minn.*

I was interested to read that high-pressure chambers can reverse the effects of general anesthesia. There may be a practical application of this "new" technique in dealing with drug overdoses. Would treatment in a high-pressure chamber alleviate the problems caused by overdoses while permitting the

body to excrete the drug in a nonharmful fashion?

*Patricia Bartlett
Ft. Myers, Fla.*

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