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Editorial and Business Offices
1719 N St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036
202-785-2255; scinews@scisvc.org

Advertising Representative
Lewis Edge & Associates, Inc.
366 Wall St., Princeton, N.J. 08540, 609-683-7900

Subscription Department
P.O. Box 1925, Marion, Ohio 43305
For new subscriptions only, call 1-800-247-2160.
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Letters

Connections may decline with age

"Memorable debate: Do old brain cells die?" (SN: 9/7/96, p. 150) prompts me to ask whether anyone has made a study of the connections between the cells. Maybe the same number of cells is there but the connections to them fail.

James F. Jackson
Carlisle, Ind.

The connections, or synapses, between brain cells may indeed change with age, but no conclusive studies have been done. — J. Travis

Send communications to:

Editor, SCIENCE NEWS
1719 N Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
or: scinews@scisvc.org
All letters subject to editing.

In search of the elusive coca bean

While I haven't had the pleasure of reading Wade Davis' new book (Books, SN: 9/7/96, p. 155), I know both him and R.E. Schultes, and I knew the late Timothy Plowman. Matter of fact, the U.S. Department of Agriculture supported their research at one time, but that was when they were studying coca, the source of cocaine, not cocoa, the source of chocolate, two of Latin America's major contributions to the world economy.

Jim Duke
Fulton, Md.

Obesity-depression link in Asia?

I'm skeptical of a genetic link between obesity and depression if the only studies were of U.S. women ("Gene pair may incite obesity, depression," SN: 9/21/96, p. 181). Has any comparable work been done in non-Western countries?

My hunch is that we are so "thin conscious" that failure to live up to media stan-

dards creates anxiety and depression. Would the same link appear in, say, India or China—based upon genetics only?

Del Dietrick
Campbell, Calif.

Lost traveller?

How did your piece of Texarkana end up in Argentina west of the Andes, which you say grew up to its east ("The original Arkansas Traveler," SN: 9/21/96, p. 186)?

Phil Payne
Lompoc, Calif.

Actually, we are both wrong about the geography. Argentina is east of the Andes, which grew to its west.

— D. Vergano

CORRECTION

In "Deadly Ebola virus seen to thrive in bats" (SN: 11/9/96, p. 294), Fort Detrick was incorrectly described as being located in Frederickburg, Md. It is in Frederick, Md. — The Editors