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Parental view of growth hormone

According to "Synthetic hormone spurs girls' growth" (SN: 4/25/98, p. 271), researchers at Southampton University Hospitals in England have discovered a way to increase girls' height by age 16 without any dire side effects. The report indicated that the girls were chosen because they ranked in the lowest 2 percentile for height among the 14,000 girls surveyed yet did not have abnormally low concentrations of growth hormone in their blood.

One might conclude that this scientific effort was deemed necessary more for the sake of a child's self-esteem than anything else. However, one of the authors of the study indicated that the increase in height did not seem to make any significant difference in the girls' psychological outlook.

As a parent of a pre-adolescent daughter who deems herself "too short," I know the frustrations first-hand. Hopefully, parents will realize that it is their love, encouragement, and support from infancy through the teen years and beyond that provide the positive outlook and psychological stability they

would want for their child and that the \$46,000 per inch would be best spent on a college education or similar endeavor.

*Dennis J. Durham
Clayton, Mo.*

Gadzooks, I've lost my dax!

I was flabbergasted to read in "The Name Game" (SN: 4/25/98, p. 268) that other children are now playing with daxes, modis, and gazzers, when I have been thinking for many years that I was the only one to possess such toys!

I had my dax (an orange one with stripes, not spots) until my sophomore year at college, when it mysteriously disappeared at a frat party. I mourned its loss for weeks. My modi, on the other hand, is still with me, occupying a place of honor on my mantelpiece until my own children are old enough to appreciate its odd tendency to slip into the seventh dimension when annoyed.

As for my gazzer, I recall asking my mother where she had obtained such a unique toy. She took me outside the house (it was a beautiful July night), pointed wordlessly up at Arcturus, and smiled knowingly. Fox Mulder would have understood perfectly.

Thank you for reviving such pleasant memories.

*Bill Black
Falmouth, Mass.*

Memory loss may spur stress

Regarding "Stress hormone may speed up brain aging" (SN: 4/25/98, p. 263), it appears to me that the patients who were suffering memory loss on a continuing basis would have noticed it and would have developed anxiety and stress syndrome as a result. This, in turn, would have resulted in increased cortisol production.

I think it would be instructive if the researchers were to measure the anxiety levels and perhaps conduct a neuropsychological evaluation of these patients during the study to see the differences in anxiety levels between those who did not have high cortisol readings and those who did.

*Richard A. Nelson
Billings, Mont.*

If stress affects memory, it may also speed the development of Alzheimer's disease.

*Erin Gallagher
San Antonio, Texas*

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Cover: Social psychologists have often misled volunteers in order to study obedience to authority and other sensitive issues. On the face of it, this practice appears necessary, but lab deceptions harbor a dark side that casts a shadow over the entire research effort, according to some scientists. **Page 394**

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