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Letters

Misery is no mystery

An article headed "Cancer tests can heighten anxiety" (SN: 11/14/98, p. 316) included this sentence: "More puzzling, among the women in the study who were due for an annual mammogram, only 14 of the 36 who tested positive for the mutations obtained one, a follow-up study showed."

I'm not puzzled, perhaps because I have survived breast cancer and coped with cancer treatment. Having a mammogram (awkward itself) and waiting for the report may mean judging treatment options, having a biopsy under general anesthesia, having tissue excised, undergoing chemotherapy, receiving radiation treatments, and starting a course of treatment that one will not survive.

So until treatment can be experienced as effective and safe, patients will put off the step we do have control over: diagnosis.

*Anne Fuller
Juneau, Alaska*

Check your oil?

The article "High-fat and healthful" (SN: 11/21/98, p. 328) is interesting to me because

I must hold down the fat content of my diet because of genetic heart disease. Presumably, the nuts and their oils in the experimental diets were not processed nor had additional saturated fat.

I have found in my shopping that many brands of nuts have significant amounts of saturated fats. It seems appropriate to warn readers that reading food labels is a necessary part of achieving a healthy diet, particularly in regard to nuts.

*Jerome J. Morrow
Grand Junction, Colo.*

"High-fat and healthful" describes experiments demonstrating the extraordinary blood-lipid benefits of a diet rich in nuts. Since the article fails to mention preparation of the nuts, I presume they were roasted, as usual. Yet, health enthusiasts urge that nuts be eaten raw, claiming that roasting greatly deteriorates their beneficial quality. Raw hazelnuts and almonds don't taste good to me. Please tell me if I can eat nuts roasted.

*Earl Callen
Chevy Chase, Md.*

Yes, they can be roasted.

—J. Raloff

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Cover: The finned octopus *Stauroteuthis syrtensis* flares out its roughly foot-long body in a laboratory aquarium. The deep-water species from the Atlantic is the only octopus known to have luminescent suckers. **Page 167** (Photo: Widder/HBOI)

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Elementary, my ear, Watson

I was reading with interest your Nov. 14, 1998, issue and had to laugh when, in "Pollen for the prosecution" (p. 316), you state, "Sherlock Holmes would be proud." If you had just applied the same quote to the article above it, "The brain gets a (new) earful," you would have scored an A+ with scholars of Holmesian trivia. If you revisit "The Case of the Cardboard Box," you will find Holmes expostulating to an incredulous Watson that the human ear is as individual as a fingerprint. From that deduction, he solves the case. Funny how Holmes, make that Arthur Conan Doyle, seemed to know this information years before his fellow scholars.

*Jim Smith
Raleigh, N.C.*

Send communications to:

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