

## This Week

- 36 Ocean Fever Heralds African Epidemics  
*Richard Monastersky*
- 36 Immune blockade impedes blood poisoning  
*Nathan Seppa*
- 37 New ingredient completes marrow recipe  
*Siri Carpenter*
- 37 Death risk drives shocking love songs  
*Susan Milius*
- 38 High-speed solar wind surfs magnetic waves  
*Ron Cowen*
- 38 Vibrating grains form floating clumps  
*Peter Weiss*
- 39 Giving mast cells their proper respect  
*John Travis*
- 39 Memory may go to pieces in schizophrenia  
*Bruce Bower*
- 39 The color of vitamin A  
*Janet Raloff*

## Articles

- 40 Africa's Latest Scourge  
A flesh-devouring bacterium begins to reveal its secrets  
*John Travis*

## Letters

### A fusion success story

Occasionally, one of the many roadblocks to controlled fusion yields to advancing knowledge ("Fusion fuel zips to core through back door," SN: 5/22/99, p. 327). However, we can already get energy from fusion at a cost only slightly higher than that of fossil fuels. There is a fusion reactor 93 million miles from Earth. Solar heating, plus electricity from photovoltaics, wind, and hydro, already contributes substantially to the world's energy supply.

It's not clear if controlled fusion can ever produce energy that is competitive with other sources. Research on solar energy and efficient technologies will produce more energy, decades sooner, than research on controlled fusion.

*Robert Baillie  
Loveland, Colo.*

### An outside line

Some think the child's skeleton in Portugal is a hybrid of Neandertal and *Homo sapiens* ("Fossil may expose humanity's hybrid

roots," SN: 5/8/99, p. 295). Others think it just is a robust child of non-Neandertal lineage. What about the possibility that it was hybrid and sterile? This would explain why Neandertals and non-Neandertals lived at the same time in the Middle East in separate lines. A long period of separate lines living in the same area would imply sterile hybrids.

*Kenneth Elder  
Austin, Texas*

I was fascinated to read in your May 8 issue that Neandertal expert Erik Trinkaus was convinced by "the huge 'snowplow' jaw, large front teeth, short legs, and broad chest" on a fossil that Neandertals and *Homo sapiens* did some interbreeding. If that is enough to convince him of hybridization, he did not have to look so far. Tune in NBC tele-

### CORRECTION

In "Cows' milk, diabetes connection bolstered" (SN: 6/26/99, p. 404), immunologist Outi Vaarala's location was out of date. She is at the National Public Health Institute in Helsinki and no longer at the University of Helsinki.

vision at 11:35 p.m. for a living human being showing these characteristics.

*Don Barnhouse  
King of Prussia, Pa.*

### Ready to rumble

I found "Battle of the sexes" (SN: 5/15/99, p. 312) unreasonable. A mammalian offspring, no matter who its father is, cannot profit from the death or ill health of its mother prior to weaning. Death then means the offspring will die, and ill health means the offspring will be badly fed. However, if a promiscuous mother has offspring in the same litter by multiple fathers, sibling rivalry makes sense. The larger embryos and babies will win in a competition for food, perhaps bad for the mother but good for the father, who wants only his offspring to survive.

*Harriet Pearlman  
Highland Park, N.J.*

While natural selection would not likely favor the paternal genes that actually kill the mother during childbirth or prevent her essential care of newborns, it could favor genes that take mother and her embryo near that precipice. —J. Travis

- 44 Does Practice Make Perfect?  
The benefits of busy hospitals  
*Damaris Christensen*

## Research Notes

- 43 Astronomy  
Watery prospects: Shoot the moon
- 43 Biology  
Dyeing to find muscle stem cells  
A surprising tale of a frog's tail
- 47 Biology  
Africanized bees make better shoppers  
Do monkeys check each others' blues?  
Show-off crickets have a shy side
- 47 Biomedicine  
Is beauty more than meets the eye?  
Pesticide exposure begins early

## Departments

- 34 Books
- 35 Letters



**Cover:** Heart attack victims fare better when treated in hospitals that care for many such patients, according to a recent report. Other studies suggest that people with ailments from cancer to AIDS are better off at hospitals that treat large numbers of people with these diseases. Health-policy researchers, however, caution that the numbers aren't the whole story. **Page 44**

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