"hairdresser" translates to "barber" in the American language)—a total of 5 cases versus an "expected" value of 1.8. For female hairdressers, the observed number was 0, the expected value, 0.6.

2) In the New York study (*3*), the 70 female bladder cancer patients included *one* beautician; there were also four male hairdressers among the 300 men. In their conclusions, the authors state "Also under suspicion are painting, hairdressing, certain textile operations, coal mining, and perhaps plumbing; there is possible exposure to dye in the first 3 occupations" (*3*, p. 1405). The statement implies that male hairdressers practice hair coloring, which is not common practice in this country.

3) The New Orleans study (*4*) does not refer to hairdressers or beauticians at all; it speaks only of barbers. It concludes that the comparatively small difference between the number of cancer patients (five) and control patients (two) may have been due to chance only.

The misstatement dissected above may seem trivial. However, in the current controversy on hair dyes, it has been cited in the public press (*5*, *6*) as raising questions concerning the safety of these dyes. One of the articles (*5*) has, in fact, been dignified by double inclusion in the *Congressional Record* (*7*).

Two points in conclusion: First, a report (*8*) on a recent epidemiological study in Massachusetts concludes, "Although suggested by earlier studies [presumably those just discussed] no excess risk was found for . . . [female] hairdressers (one observed, 0.9 expected)." Second, even if beauticians had been observed to incur excess bladder cancer, there would be no justification for linking this to exposure to hair dyes. Tests in which the skin of animals was painted throughout their lifetime with dye composites (*9*) and numerous skin painting and feeding studies in which single ingredients of dyes were tested have shown no such association.

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Succulent Stalks

So, that's what does it! Robert H. White ["Occurrence of *S*-methyl thioesters in urines of humans after they have eaten asparagus" (5 Sept., p. 810)] should now guide his research to a really meaningful conclusion by attempting to establish a correlation between asparagus quality and urine odor specificity, something many an asparagus devotee can do without the benefit of laboratory facilities. (One friend goes so far as to insist that the effect is modulated by the vintage of the companion wine.)

I, for one, choose to remain unconvinced. The uniqueness of the succulent stalks must be due to a certain wonderful and mysterious magic, not to some substance with a name I can't pronounce.

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