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Sly Statistics

Gina Kolata, in her article "Shakespeare's new poem: An ode to statistics" (Research News, 24 Jan., p. 335) presents statistical evidence that a newly discovered poem may reasonably be attributed to Shakespeare.

The excerpt quoted in the article is strikingly similar to the following 17th-century poem on statistics by Speaker Ashe.

Shall I try not to lie,
Not to cheat with deceptions,
mistruths breeding?
Shall I fend off the tendency
to woo with biased views
so misleading?
Then sly statistics mean tricks
Must I renounce forever.
From unmarked scales I quail,
Unfair compare employing never.

DAVID BIRKES
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Cells, Patients' Rights, and Researchers' Responsibilities

The briefing by Marjorie Sun "Who should have rights to a patient's cells?" (News and Comment, 7 Feb., p. 543) leads off with a sentence referring to "the rights of patients and the responsibilities of research-

ers." A passing reference is made later to "informed consent."

I am a lawyer and I am constantly being shamed by my so-called brethren at the Bar, who have distorted litigation into a form of shakedown. Of course, if the cells in question are to be separated from the "patient" in a manner posing any danger to the patient or inhibiting the use of the best state-of-the-art therapy, the patient's (or his lawful representative's) consent is properly required. But suppose the cells are to be thrown away unless salvaged by the researcher. Then, since the cells are abandoned material, the salvager and not the former possessor has "ownership" of them. To suggest that such a former possessor of cells is "participating in the research" is silly. A perfect example of such abandoned cells is found in the cuttings on the floor of a barbershop.

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Erratum: The caption for the photograph accompanying the review of *Neurobiology of Arachnids* (28 Mar., p. 1610) should have read, "*Peccilotheria regalis*, an Indian bird-spider. Beneath it is a spike train recorded from a sensory neuron responding to mechanical stimuli in the spider *Cupiennius salei*."

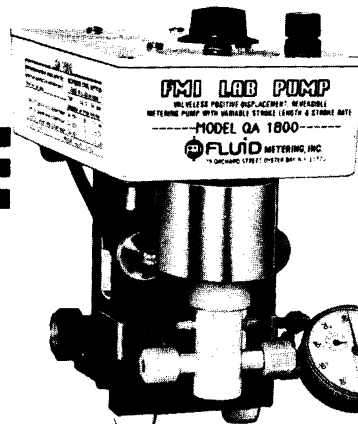
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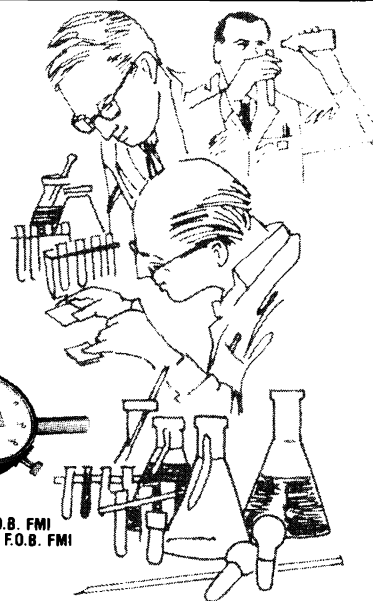
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