

More fundamentally, the Oregon approach is inferior to the British method of rationing in at least two ways. Oregon is trying to determine which procedures will be available and which will be entirely denied. This approach will permit low priority uses of some approved procedures, while excluding some high benefit uses of disapproved categories of care. Furthermore, the Oregon scheme would apply only to Medicaid recipients but not to the rest of the population. The British method of rationing, in contrast, is based on budget limits covering essentially all medical care. This method permits officials to set budgets to maximize the value of health services. Furthermore, the British seem to think that if rationing is necessary it should apply to services not just for the poor but for everyone. That is our point too.

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#### Competition Exclusion Principle

In his News & Comment article "Paleoanthropology gets physical" (16 Feb., p. 798), Eliot Marshall mentions the belief of some physical anthropologists that Neandertals and anatomically modern humans couldn't have coexisted because "classic evolutionary biology rules out the notion that two types could share such a small territory." This competitive exclusion principle (CEP) gained attention among paleoanthropologists when it was invoked to argue that robust and gracile australopithecines must have belonged to a single polymorphic species (1). The logic used was that the human niche is culture (especially material culture—tools); since culture is so flexible, niche breadth is great, and no two culture-bearing species can coexist.

Similar unspecialized primates can coexist despite significant dietary and habitat over-

lap (2) and may even form regular polyspecific associations (3), so the crux of the problem is clearly how culture and the CEP interact. The answer to this is becoming apparent with each newly discovered fossil; multiple hominid taxa at Koobi Fora (4) and the possibility that *Homo habilis* actually represents at least two species (5) together indicate that material culture per se was not a constraining factor, at geological if not ecological scales of resolution, during our early days.

As for the more elaborated (material) cultures of Neandertals and early modern humans, the CEP provides paleoanthropologists with a handy null hypothesis; but let's not forget what null hypotheses are for.

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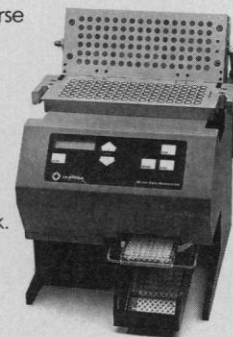
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