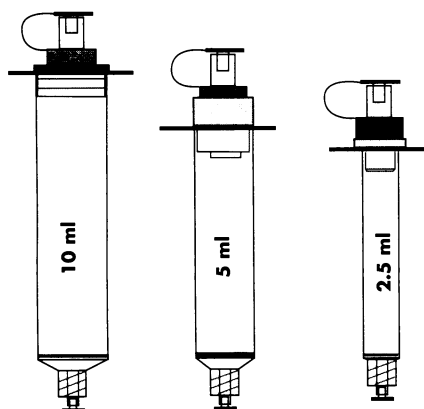




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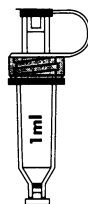
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of viruses that do not and do, respectively, systemically infect the plant. It reads, "Mixed subliminal and conventional infections have likely already brought together combinations of virus genes that some have assumed could be in proximity only when a virus infects a plant that is transgenically expressing the genes of other viruses." Recommendations in the report of the Union of Concerned Scientists rely not only on the assumption that transgenic plants expressing virus RNA sequences will provide new opportunities for recombination between distantly related virus RNA sequences but also on the assumption that such opportunities are not already very common in crop plants. The phenomena we identified in our Perspective give reason to doubt the validity of the latter assumption. Detriment to society can derive from overestimating, as well as from underestimating, the risks of a new technology, relative to risks inherent in natural phenomena and in already practiced technologies.

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Adolescent Health Study

The piece "Teen sex survey back on track" (Random Samples, 25 Mar., p. 1688) presents a misleading picture of the congressionally mandated study of adolescent health recently funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. This new comprehensive, national longitudinal study is designed to obtain long-needed information about the determinants of adolescent health. Its pioneering design moves beyond most existing research to look at health determinants and influences in the environments of young people—their families, peer groups, schools, neighborhoods, and communities. It is not a "sex survey," but a broad-reaching study that focuses on all aspects of adolescent health and health-related behaviors.

Perhaps as disappointing as its misrepresentation is the item's preoccupation with sex and political controversy. Such sensationalized journalism does not live up to the standard that the scientific community expects from such a respected journal as *Science*.

Duane Alexander
Director,

National Institute of Child Health
and Human Development,
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Response: The new study, like the one that politics killed, does include a survey of teen sexual behavior, prepared by the research center that prepared the earlier survey.

—Eds.

Proposed NSF Violence Center

In a ScienceScope item, "NSF considers a violence center" (18 Mar., p. 1551), concerning the feasibility and desirability of establishing a violence center at the National Science Foundation (NSF), I am quoted as saying, "What we need now is action, not more basic research." This is not an accurate reflection of what I stated or what I believe.

In fact, when asked about concerns that I might have about the establishment of such a center, I stated that although we need more basic scientific research, policy-makers and the public have expressed an urgent need to identify effective prevention strategies. I stated my concern that NSF's orientation toward basic sciences might result in insufficient attention being given to policy-relevant research, that is, research that can help determine what works and what doesn't work in preventing injuries and deaths associated with violence in our society.

I am not "rankled" by the idea of an NSF center and believe that NSF can make an important contribution to the understanding of violence that will ultimately have a beneficial influence on violence prevention. Research on violence and its prevention is greatly underfunded relative to the magnitude of the problem, and NSF's participation in this area will expand a field of science that is starved for resources.

I also believe that the public will be better served if agencies such as the NSF, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institute of Mental Health, and the National Institute of Justice can coordinate their perspectives and activities in sponsoring research on violence. For all these reasons, I am fully supportive of efforts by Susan White, director of NSF's Law and Social Science program, to reach out to these and other agencies for input into the feasibility and desirability of establishing a violence center at NSF.

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