

want. We propose that the mummified cord stump serve as a source of genetic information for an individual.

We found a family with decreased cholinesterase activity in serum and carried out a genetical study on the gene encoding for the enzyme butyrylcholinesterase (1). The family members were cooperative and agreed to provide blood samples. But the parents were reluctant to have blood drawn from their children (a 1-year-old boy and a newborn infant) and provided small pieces of umbilical cord stumps instead. Sequencing was successful and revealed a mutation (1).

One of us happened to remember that he had been keeping the umbilical cord stump of his son. We analyzed its DNA and obtained a normal sequence of the gene for use as a control. The son was 20 years old at the time of our investigation, which indicates that an umbilical cord stump can be used for genetic analyses even after 20 years.

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References

1. S. Iida *et al.*, *Hum. Mutat.* **6**, 349 (1995).

I write to commend Clare Thompson on her excellent article. She has provided a lucid summary of recent developments in a complex area that includes hematology, immunology, and genetics. I would like to note that, with respect to the "first cord blood bank in the UK," one was established by the Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service in November 1994.

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I would like to object to the flippant references to umbilical cords in Thompson's otherwise excellent and illuminating article. In the title and first three sentences alone the umbilical cord is referred to as "garbage," "detritus," and "discard." This "garbage" intimately and beautifully connects sentient beings for 9 months.

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Corrections and Clarifications

In the reply by Kathy Hudson and Francis Collins (1 Dec., p. 1423) to the letter from Arnold Dicke (1 Dec., p. 1422), Republican Senator Mark Hatfield of Oregon is incorrectly identified as a Democrat. *Science* regrets the error, which was introduced during editing.

The authors of the two Policy Forums in the special section "Science in China" (17 Nov., pp. 1153 and 1154, respectively) should have been identified as Zhou Guangzhao and Zhu Lilan, respectively, in the Table of Contents for the issue of 17 November (p. 1095).

Letters to the Editor

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