not a matter of conscription. Patients should be asked in advance of a sample being taken whether they are willing to have it used for genetic research or whether, if the researcher is planning to recontact them with results, they want to refuse that contact. This is unlikely to, as some pathologists have suggested, "totally cripple" research in the country. In institutions that already ask for consent for genetics research, it is seldom, if ever, refused.

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Access to the Internet

I would like to comment on the editorial "An enhanced perspective" by Floyd E. Bloom (9 Feb., p. 741). Issues of equity should be taken into account in education and scientific research in general. It was stated in a CNN broadcast on 16 February that students from low-income households have fewer opportunities to have access to the Internet in schools. Responding to that report, President Clinton announced that inequitable use or access to the information highway in schools should be addressed.

The "resources required to provide" the enhanced information network are enormous. Some are able to afford the infrastructures for such a network to be enhanced. However, in some low-income communities, and in low-income countries, people may live far away from the information highway. More than 60 million people worldwide, most of them in high-income countries, currently use the Internet. Without improving access, the enhanced perspectives could further widen disparities between the privileged and the underprivileged.

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Editor's note: We would be interested in a wider expression of opinions on this matter.

From Plants to Mammals

We read with interest Rachel Nowak's piece on the American Society of Human Genetics meeting describing the dominant negative mutation in myotonic dystrophy that occurs in RNA (Research News, 17 Nov., p. 1120). The idea that an aberrant RNA (truncated, improperly processed, or overly abundant) can also "knock out" normal copies of the RNA is not, however, entirely new. This possibility has been recognized by plant molecular biologists studying the phenomena sense suppression (*1*) and RNA-mediated virus resistance (*2*) in transgenic plants. An examination of the plant literature on these topics [for reviews, see (*3*)] might be helpful to researchers identifying similar and possibly related processes in mammals.

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