

outcome can actually be achieved. Certainly, this result is hardly counterintuitive. Is it a stunt? We didn't think so, and our peer reviewers didn't think so either.

Sticking one's head in the sand and hoping that unpleasant realities will go away has never been a fruitful approach to science or to public policy. Nevertheless, it is surely true that there should continue to be serious conversations about the relationship between scientific research, publication, and security—in which we plan to participate in a responsible manner.

DONALD KENNEDY

Unfair Characterization of Industry Response

JOCELYN KAISER'S ARTICLE "SOFTWARE glitch threw off mortality estimates" (News of the Week, 14 June, p. 1945) unfairly characterizes industry groups' response to the recent discovery that a software issue had led researchers to overestimate the risks of fine particles—at least that of this industry representative. To portray industry as "crowing" or having "complaints" about this research is unfair.

Manufacturers of motor vehicles, diesel

engines, and fuels are partners with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and equal funders and supporters of Health Effects Institute research, including the research in question. In addition, these manufacturers spend billions of research dollars on reducing emissions and improving product efficiency—the results of which have been substantial. According to the EPA, particles from diesel engines make up only 5.56% of all fine particles in the air, and from 1990 to 1998, those levels dropped by 37%. Further improvements will come from the introduction of cleaner diesel engines later this year and in 2007.

Complex computer models and statistics are not widely understood or publicized, but they are the very foundation of virtually every important scientific and public policy decision. Thanks to the curiosity of researchers at Johns Hopkins University, the nuances and limitations of a popular statistical package were uncovered. The impacts of these findings and any restatement relative to particulate studies will ultimately strengthen scientific research.

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Academic Recruitment in Spain and Italy

ACCORDING TO XAVIER BOSCH'S ARTICLE "Reforms spark more jobs—and protests" (News of the Week, 1 Feb., p. 781), the Spanish government's reform of university hiring practices is an effort to circumvent cronyism by abolishing the system of five-member boards (two from the university that has advertised the new position) that select candidates for academic posts. Spanish universities had been criticized for hiring internal or local candidates over 90% of the time. The Italian system of university appointments (concorsi) is similar to the old Spanish one, and the results seem similar too. In fact, nearly 100% of concorsi select internal or local candidates.

Do Italian concorsi select the best applicants on the basis of the quality of their research? According to Italian law, each candidate is required to undergo a formal public examination in which a committee of five university professors, with one from the university advertising the position, choose the two best candidates (three candidates until the year 2000). We recently revisited 13 out of 14 concorsi from 2000 for the selection of full professors in the field of general surgery.

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