Retraction

THE REPORT "PREVENTION OF CHEMOTHERAPY-induced alopecia in rats by CDK inhibitors" (*1*) harbors a fundamental inaccuracy. Although the chemical structure of compound **4** is correct as presented, we have not been able to reproduce the biological activity of this compound in the neonatal rat model of chemotherapy-induced alopecia. Thus, we must retract our results. We are continuing to investigate several compounds from another structural class of CDK inhibitors that block chemotherapy-induced alopecia in this model.

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Reference
1. S. T. Davis *et al.*, *Science* **291**, 134 (2001).

Letters to the Editor

Letters (~300 words) discuss material published in *Science* in the previous 6 months or issues of general interest. They can be submitted by e-mail (science_letters@aaas.org), the Web (www.letter2science.org), or regular mail (1200 New York Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20005, USA). Letters are not acknowledged upon receipt, nor are authors generally consulted before publication. Whether published in full or in part, letters are subject to editing for clarity and space.

The Discovery of the Electric Shock

IN A MODERN WORLD OF RUBBER SOLES, linoleum floors, and the dry air of central heating, the small pain of an electric discharge spark is an everyday occurrence. It is difficult to imagine the excitement the phenomenon caused when first discovered in the 18th century. It went so far that professional performers carried out experiments with static electricity at fairs and in pubs (*1*, *2*). The static charges were mostly created with rubbed glass tubes or so-called electricity machines.

Stephen Gray (1666–1736) was the first to demonstrate that a human being can be electrified. He showed that a boy, suspended from the ceiling by strings of "Hair-line" or silk, could be made to attract "Leaf-brass" after having been exposed to a rubbed glass tube (*3*, p. 39–40).

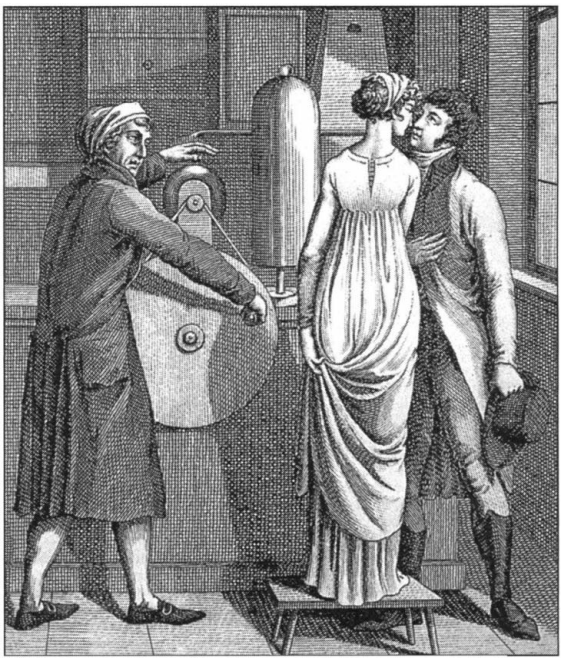
In 1734, Charles Dufay published a paper in which he wrote, "I suspended a Child on Silk Lines, and made all the surprising Experiments described by Mr. Gray. But having tried the Experiment upon my own Body in the same manner, I observed several things very remarkable... if another Person approach me, and pass his Hand within an Inch or thereabouts of my Face, Legs, Hand or Cloaths, there immidiately issues from my Body one or more pricking Shoots, with a crackling Noise that causes to that Person as well as to my self, a little Pain resembling... the burning from a Spark of Fire..." (*4*, p. 261–262).

A few months later, Gray very courteously gave Dufay full credit for discovering the electric shock (*5*, p. 17).

In 1766, Anna Williams (1706–83) published a book, *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse* (*6*). In a note to the poem "On the Death of Stephen Grey, F.R.S." (*6*, pp. *42–43*), she writes: "The Publisher of this Miscellany, as she was assisting Mr. Grey in his experiments, was the first that observed and notified the emission of the electrical spark from a human body." It is clear that Anna Williams is very much aware of the importance of what she claims as her discovery. She has not merely "observed"; she has also "notified."

Most papers and books on Gray published over the years (*7–12*) make a brief reference to Williams, but none point out the puzzling fact that she claims the honor of a scientific discovery that Gray publicly acknowledged to have been made by Dufay.

Anna Williams came to London in 1730. In 1740, she went blind. Her fate caught the attention of Samuel Johnson, and she lived in his home for many years. In a letter from 1754, Johnson writes: "she understands chimistry and many other arts with which Ladies are seldom acquainted" (*13*, p. 232–233).



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A popular experiment with "*homo electrificatus*" was to electrify a woman and have a man approach her for a kiss (*16*, *17*). Anonymous copper-plate engraving (circa 1800).