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Brief Communications Arising

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- Contributions should be written as focused articles comprehensible to non-specialists: lists of technical points are not appropriate for publication. They should pertain to the main conclusion of the published paper and should not concern relatively unimportant points.
- All contributions should be measured in tone, and should not contain inflammatory or otherwise intemperate language.
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- Otherwise, when the contribution is submitted to *Nature*, copies of correspondence with the original authors should be enclosed for the editor's information. The correspondence should accompany the submission as an attachment clearly labelled as 'Correspondence with the *Nature* authors'.

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The editors will decide how to proceed on the basis of whether the central conclusion of the *Nature* paper is brought into question; the length of time since the original publication; and whether a comment or exchange of views is likely to be of value to readers. Because *Nature* receives so many comments, those that do not meet these criteria are referred to the specialist literature.

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Reply from the *Nature* authors. This Reply is not a referee's report, but is helpful to the editors and referees in making a decision about publication of the comment and/or a reply. The responders are defined as the authors of the published contribution that is the subject of the comment, and no-one else.

Replying authors must keep the comment confidential and must not use it for their own research or for any other purpose apart from replying to the comment, nor can they distribute it without first obtaining *Nature's* permission.

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Replies are published only when they add to the debate, and not when they reiterate points already published. They should not contain new data, but be confined to replying to the specific issue raised about the published paper.

The permitted word limit for Replies is shorter (up to 500 words) than for the critical Brief Communication Arising, because the replying authors have already had the opportunity to publish their views in our pages.

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