It is like asking a carpenter what his field is and getting the reply, "hammer" or "saw" or "screwdriver". But what do you build? What do you create? Even if such questions did occur to scientists, the problem to be solved would require such a wide variety of techniques and encroach on so many areas of specialization that, through the peer-review system, it could never be funded.

This means unfortunately that anyone with Greene's "generalized curiosity" is now unable to prosper in science. In the near future, those who go in and stay in will mainly be those with such limited thinking ability that nothing scientifically really new will ever be discovered. Is that what everyone wants?

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Sir — I disagree with Greene's main conclusions. In my opinion, the main impediment in discussing areas of research other than our own is the knowledge that we do not know enough. While I am giving classes about CD4-gp120 interactions and CCR5/CXCR4 discrimination of HIV tropism, new receptors are being described and my knowledge seems completely outdated.

The 'information network' is so immense that we do not have time to read all about our narrow specialities, much less related areas, and still do our own research. And the pressure to publish is still increasing, the number of reviews published appears to me to be decreasing, and my ignorance of results from other areas of research stupefying.

Working in research I do not like being 'outdated' or simply wrong, so I avoid public statement of opinions.

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Duplications in nomenclature

Sir — The nomenclature of genes and proteins in molecular and developmental biology, as discussed in a recent leading article in *Nature*[1], is often illogical and confusing. This problem is sometimes compounded when two proteins without any structural and functional relationship receive the same designation.

In a recent publication by Pan *et al.*[2], for example, the authors describe the cloning and characterization of a new membrane-anchored chemokine and propose the name "neurotactin" for this type of molecule.

The term "neurotactin" was, however, used previously to describe a *Drosophila* membrane protein with an extracellular serine esterase-type protein domain which is dynamically expressed by neuroblasts and other tissues in the fly embryo[3,4]. *Drosophila* neurotactin has no sequence or functional similarity to the molecule characterized by Pan *et al.*[2].

As a solution to such problems, journals should require the authors of manuscripts in which new names or terms are proposed to carry out a computer literature search.

In the case described above, a Medline search would have revealed the duplication and avoided possible confusion to some readers. Luckily, the CX3C membrane-bound chemokine described by Pan *et al.*[2] is identical to a molecule for which Bazan *et al.*[5] proposed the name "fractalkline", so an alternative designation is available.

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