CORRESPONDENCE

KIT'S COMPLAINTS

To the editor:

I am writing to correct some inaccuracies in the otherwise excellent story entitled "Bringing Biotech to Animal Health Care," by Jennifer Van Brunt (July 1987, p. 679).

Saul Kit, professor of Baylor College of Medicine and scientific advisor to NovaGene (Houston, TX), is actually a coinventor of the Omnivac-PRV pseudorabies vaccine (along with Malon Kit, founder of NovaGene and adjunct research assistant professor at Baylor College of Medicine). Saul Kit has no financial interest in NovaGene.

Also, the article neglects to mention that in March of 1986 Baylor College of Medicine and NovaGene announced a second-generation genetically engineered pseudorabies vaccine with a test to serologically distinguish vaccinated from pseudorabies-infected animals. Finally, the table on "Vaccines and Their Developers" fails to list the thymidine kinase-negative bovine infectious rhinotracheitis vaccines invented by Saul and Malon Kit.

Saul Kit, Ph.D.
Head, Division of Biochemical Virology
Baylor College of Medicine
Texas Medical Center
Houston, TX 77030

BOEHRINGER MANNHEIM'S ORGANIZATION

To the editor:

Arthur Klausner's article, "Immunoassays Flourish in New Markets" (June '87), was interesting and informative, and it showed that plant disease diagnosis is indeed a growing area with plenty of opportunity for the future.

I would, however, like to correct some of the information presented about our company and its products. Our company is Boehringer Mannheim Biochemicals, a division of Boehringer Mannheim Corporation (BMC). BMC is a U.S. (not a West German) company, but we do have strong ties with Boehringer Mannheim GmbH in West Germany, a sister company. Boehringer Mannheim Diagnostics (mentioned in the article) is another division of BMC here in the U.S., but they do not make phyto-diagnostic reagents.

Boehringer Mannheim Biochemi-

cals is a well-known supplier of products for molecular biology, immunology, analytical biochemistry, and cell culture. Our plant diagnostic products are part of what we call our "Food Technology" area, for which we are less well-known. Besides our ELISA-based test kits for detecting potato viruses, we offer individual reagents for the detection of other plant viruses, such as apple mosaic, plum pox, tomato ringspot, prunus necrotic, and beet necrotic yellow vein. We also offer reagents for the detection of ornamental plant viruses, including carnation mottle, *Cymbidium* mosaic, and *Odontoglossum* ringspot, as well as an RNA/DNA hybridization EIA kit for detection of potato spindle tuber viroid (PSTV).

Kristen E. Kinkade
Product Manager
Boehringer Mannheim Biochemicals
Indianapolis, IN 46250

GENENTECH NO PROMETHEUS

To the editor:

I found great irony in comparing August's "First Word" editorial with Amanda Iles' "Last Word." In the former, you hint at the hubris behind some of the travails of Genentech et al. yet persist in the notion of the "great" being punished. You proceed in a welter of self-pity to bemoan that "you do your best....and you get pilloried for it."

Let us remember that most of us do science either because it interests us, or because (at last) there is a chance to make some money doing it. The fact that we may benefit humankind is a pleasant happenstance, but let's not be fooled into seeing ourselves as martyrs. Your remarks merely add self-righteousness to the hubris. Genentech a Prometheus? Let's get serious.

I find Jeremy Rifkin as irritating as you do. However, he would not have an audience or any supporters if it had not been for decades of arrogance and condescension toward the public on the part of practicing scientists. This is where you might have taken a cue from Ms. Iles. Her point about the importance of public understanding is well taken (even though it is presented with a trace of condescension). It has great applicability to the Genentech tissue-type plasminogen activator debacle: The

deficiencies in the firm's application reflected not only inexperience and sloppiness, but contempt for and arrogance toward those with whom communication was essential.

I hope that as a spokesman for our industry, you will consider more closely the effects of our attitudes on the reception we receive from those whose response we depend upon.

Charles Hsu, Ph.D.
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Invitron Corp.
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DEFINING BIOTECHNOLOGY

To the editor:

Bravo for your excellent and persuasive editorial entitled "Revival Meeting" (*Bio/Technology* 5:415 May '87). I have long "preached" to my students that the risk-benefit ratio with respect to biotechnology was enormously in favor of benefit.

Professor William H. Stone
Cowles Distinguished Professor
of Biology
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P.S. To make a distinction, I define (for my students) the following: *Genetic Engineering*: the basic science of manipulating genes and organisms to construct novel biological entities; *Biotechnology*: the techniques that use living organisms, or parts of organisms such as cells, to make or to modify products, to improve plants or animals, or to develop microorganisms for specific applications.

ERRATUM

The editors regret that "Rapid Production of Transgenic Flowering Shoots and F1 Progeny from *Nicotiana plumbaginifolia* Epidermal Peels" by Toan Hanh Trinh, Seth Mante, Eng-Chong Pua, and Nam-Hai Chua (*Bio/Technology* 5:1081-1084, Oct. '87) appeared with its first figure inverted—a circumstance that may have hampered interpretation of the photo (on page 1082) of a transgenic shoot of *N. plumbaginifolia* with three flowering buds.