Correspondence

Don't single out Chinese names

I agree with Cristina Muñoz-Pinedo that researchers and scholars should have unique identifiers such as those provided by ORCID, but I object to the singling out of Chinese scientists for not complying with the system (*Nature* **565**, 161; 2019). When different cultures seek to do business, all parties need to make compromises.

Although "millions of Chinese people share the same 100 last names", millions do not — there are more than 5,000 surnames in China. The 100 most common Chinese surnames are used by roughly 80% of the country's population (see go.nature.com/2sjqufi; in Chinese), a situation that would hold for any country with a large enough population. There are probably many scholars with the last names García or Hernández, say, in Muñoz-Pinedo's Spain and in the Spanish-speaking nations of Central and South America.

In my view, *Nature* and other journals should follow an initiative by the *Journal of Biological Chemistry* and the *Journal of Neuroscience* (see go.nature.com/2xhiIj5), among others, to list authors in the script of their own language — whether Arabic, Urdu, Kanji or other — as well as in the Roman alphabet and in ORCID or similar. If you can accommodate accented letters in European names, you should extend comparable courtesy to other international scholars.

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Forests are still key to climate action

We disagree with those who caution against relying on forests as a solution to global warming until the warming effects of trees themselves are better understood (see *Nature* **565**, 280–282; 2019).

Forests are currently the safest, most cost-effective way to avoid dangerous increases in global warming, through their retention, management and restoration (B. W. Griscom *et al. Proc. Natl Acad. Sci. USA* **114**, 11645–11650; 2017). The land sink for carbon (which is made up mainly of intact forests) captures at least 30% of global emissions generated by human activity (C. Le Quéré *et al. Earth Syst. Sci. Data* **10**, 405–448; 2018). And there is almost universal agreement that increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere will boost the rates of carbon uptake on land (G. Schurgers *et al. Geophys. Res. Lett.* **45**, 4329–4336; 2018).

Simple tree-planting programmes might not simulate the climate-mitigation capabilities attributed to established forests. Until the warming effects of some trees are quantified and explained, forests must be managed to optimize their capacity to act as sinks.

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**On behalf of 4 correspondents (see go.nature.com/2tccpdy for full list).*

Science looks worse as it gets better

It is easy to assume that science is more flawed than in the past, given widespread coverage of the reproducibility crisis, perverse incentives and *P*-value hacking, alongside a proliferation of corrective measures (see, for example, C. K. Gunsalus *et al. Nature* **566**, 173–175; 2019). But it could be that we are now seeing more problems simply because we are more alert to them.

Consider related lessons from medicine. When a new treatment method is invented for a particular disease, there is typically an increase in the number of people who might benefit from that treatment, because conditions that were previously undetectable or ignored are now uncovered systematically.

Science could be the same. Today, we study in minute detail the dynamics of discovery, careers, teams and institutions, sometimes exposing issues that we didn't know existed (see S. Fortunato *et al. Science* **359**, eaao0185; 2018). That, to me, is grounds for optimism: such intense scrutiny should markedly improve the quality of science.

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Supercollider critics: learn from history

Hugely expensive new accelerators are being proposed to look for unknown entities such as particles of dark matter and companions of the Higgs boson (see *Nature* **565**, 398; 2019). Opponents of these plans could learn from history.

Critics argue, for example, that such 'big science' projects drain money away from other research, a view that led to the cancellation of the US Superconducting Super Collider in 1993. To my knowledge, that cancellation brought no funding benefit to other sciences. And because Europe has already committed to the ITER fusion project for energy production in France, and to the LISA gravitational-wave experiment in space; successors to the Large Hadron Collider would not be competing for funding with those projects.

Others are sceptical about the existence of new particles, given that nothing has materialized since the discovery of the Higgs boson in 2012. That puts me in mind of Spain's reaction to Christopher Columbus, when he requested funding to explore a westerly route to Asia in the fifteenth century. His proposal was initially rejected by a royal commission, which pronounced that "so many centuries after the Creation, it is unlikely that anyone could find hitherto unknown lands of any value". Columbus sailed west anyway and found "hitherto unknown" lands that have dominated the planet for the past century.

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Three women with a claim to astatine

In this International Year of the Periodic Table, we suggest that three unsung women — Yvette Cauchois, Berta Karlik and Traude Bernert — should also be celebrated (see B. Van Tiggelen and A. Lykknes *Nature* **565**, 559–561; 2019). They all contributed to the discovery of the halogen astatine (At), one of the rarest elements in Earth's crust.

Astatine (atomic number 85) is radioactive. Cauchois and Horia Hulubei first detected the isotope astatine-218 in a sample of radon-222 in 1939 in Paris (M. Thoennessen *Int. J. Mod. Phys. E* **25**, 1630004; 2016). Karlik and Bernert subsequently reported ^{218}At (in 1942), then ^{216}At and ^{215}At (in 1943), in natural samples at the Institute for Radium Research in Vienna (B. Karlik *Monatsh. Chemie* **77**, 348–351; 1947). And Dale Corson, Kenneth MacKenzie and Emilio Segrè synthesized and chemically characterized ^{211}At, which doesn't occur naturally, in 1940 in Berkeley, California.

Misperceptions about allegiances during the Second World War could have influenced those adjudicating discovery assignments (see B. F. Thornton and S. C. Burdette *Bull. Hist. Chem.* **35**, 86–96; 2010), and Cauchois and Hulubei's experiments were largely forgotten. With the acceptance of synthetic elements into the periodic table, element 85 was credited to the Berkeley group.

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