Letters to the Editor

What's Wrong with Freedom?

Dear Sir

It seems a pity that the excellent editorial by Conlon should have evinced a bout of editor-in-chiefatorial tautological rigidity (see footnote Diabetologia 18, P88). When difficulties in nomenclature arise these may reflect genuine scientific problems and are not necessarily overcome by the stroke of the pen. Thus much of the literature on glucagon-like peptides is carried in the gastro-enterological literature where, confusingly, IRG usually means immunoreactive gastrin (another system with multiple hormonal forms). Antibodies in real life do not fall so neatly into the N and C terminal designation nor, even when regionally specific, do they necessarily have the same totally clear cut crossreactivities with particular peptides, especially when used for immunocytochemistry. The gel chromatography molecular weight designations are in the nature of a fairy tale, column peak position varying greatly with the physical conditions used, and anyway are further subdivisible if different analytical techniques are used. It seems a pity, therefore, for journal editors to force artificial molecular weight numbers on authors. In future when the materials have been sequenced, we will certainly be able to define these and indeed be able to show that the alpha cell of the pancreas and EG cell of the gut

produce identical precursor peptides. Meanwhile the latter proposal is only an exciting *speculation*. Insisting that for Diabetologia, plasma "immunoreactive glucagon" (IRG) has a different meaning to plasma "glucagon-like immunoreactivity" (GLI) [presumably in plasma obtained by subtracting the former from a third entity – plasma "total glucagon-like immunoreactivity" (GLIT)] is unlikely to clarify the situation for the general reader and is an unhelpful straight-jacket for development of scientific thought. For example under the above scheme which term is appropriate for pancreatic "glicentin-like immunoreactivity". What's wrong with freedom?

Yours sincerely

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