younger than 65 years. It is entirely plausible that BiDil will work in others, but so far race is the only "marker" of drug responsiveness. More research, especially gene-based research, is underway. But given the magnitude of benefit of BiDil, and the gravity of heart failure in African-Americans, it is a travesty that polarizing race-based arguments have paralyzed implementation of the best care for a disadvantaged patient population. These debates need to cease so that effective therapy may proceed.

Clyde W. Yancy
Association of Black Cardiologists

Bobbing and Perceiving

In "Windows on the Mind," Susana Martinez-Conde and Stephen L. Macknik write about tiny eye tics known as microsaccades that enable us to see more clearly. A long time ago I was intrigued by a report that stated that the familiar bob of pigeons' heads is integral to their vision. Do pigeons use this head bob as an evolutionary equivalent to our microsaccades?

Bruce Resch
East Meadow, N.Y.

YOUR EYE needs to move to focus on the important things in life.

THE AUTHORS REPLY: *This is an interesting question that we had not previously considered. According to physiologist Roger H. S. Carpenter, some striking differences exist between fixational eye movements of birds and those of primates. In the pigeon and the owl, there are short bursts of miniature eye movements, with frequencies of 20 to 30 hertz and amplitudes equal to or greater than 2 degrees of visual angle. The perceptual effects of these oscillations are unknown, but they may perform a similar task to that of fixational eye movements in primates, including humans. Pigeons also use head motions to stabilize the retinal image during locomotion. (They can therefore fixate their gaze while they walk!) The result is the slightly comical gait of birds such as chickens and ducks, in which the body walks on while the head is temporarily left behind, to be jerked forward again at the next step (sometimes called "nystagmus" of the head). It is not clear whether pigeons' head bobbing improves their vision per se, but they do use a combination of head and fixational eye movements to control visual fixation.*

Thirsty Machine

In "Data Center in a Box," M. Mitchell Waldrop competently describes how servers operating within a shipping container can be more efficiently cooled. But I find the accompanying photograph of such a container in an arid province, placed for "humanitarian aid," to be incongruous and of poor taste. The issue is how to cool the 60 gallons of hot water leaving and returning to the container every minute. What many do not realize is that removing heat from water with an efficient industrial chiller can also consume water, exactly what indigenous peoples in such arid areas do not have!

Robert Garner
via e-mail

ERRATA "The Shark's Electric Sense," by R. Douglas Fields, states that a shark can sense one millionth of a volt per centimeter of seawater. The figure should have been given as 10 billionths of a volt per centimeter—equivalent to sensing a 1.5-volt battery across 1,500 kilometers of seawater.

In the box "How BiDil Treats Heart Failure," on page 44 of "Race in a Bottle," by Jonathan Kahn, nitric oxide is incorrectly labeled as NO_2 rather than NO.

"How does catnip work its magic on cats?" by Ramona Turner [Ask the Experts], refers to the amygdala as residing in the midbrain. The correct location is the forebrain.

Letters to the Editor

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Letters may be edited for length and clarity. We regret that we cannot answer all correspondence.

BRIAN MARANAN PINEDA