



Yucatan Meteor: The Real Impact

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reported that exposure to UV light increases interleukin-10 (IL-10) production by monocytes (1). Second, it was found that a subset of asymptomatic, HIV-seropositive individuals who exhibit a particularly severe defect in T helper cell function (determined by reduced T cell proliferation and interleukin-2 production) shows elevated production of IL-10 (2). Third, it appears that T helper 1-type responses that augment cellular immunity may be protective against AIDS, whereas T helper 2-type responses that enhance humoral immunity are not (Jon Cohen, *News & Comment*, 10 July, p. 152) (3). Because T helper 2-type responses are characterized by elevated IL-10 levels, a cytokine that down-regulates T helper 1-type responses (4), it is possible that the potential immunoprotective effect provided by T helper 1-type responses would be reduced or eliminated by a UV-induced increase in IL-10 production. Thus, UV exposure could also exacerbate progression to AIDS by interfering with protective immunity.

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The caprice of one large meteor hitting the earth 65 million years ago (Richard A. Kerr, *Research News*, 14 Aug., p. 878) is responsible for the existence of humanity. Had the dinosaurs survived, with all their capacity for carnivory, the large mammals, including primates, would never have evolved. On the other hand, humans could only have evolved through the elimination of both the carnivorous and the herbivorous dinosaurs. These reptilian megafauna would have both eaten the humans and eaten the subjects of their agropastoralism.

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New Observations

Although a letter is not the accepted way of reporting new observations, my preliminary findings are of significant enough interest to warrant an exception. In my last year of investigations into the field of jobhontology, specifically focused on my transformation from tenuous to tenure track, I have made some startling observations. In physiology and related biomedical departments there has been an unexpected modification from hard-money positions into institutional opportunities for cost-cutting. From approximately 36 nationally advertised positions in biomedical and biology departments, 5 positions are confirmed to have undergone such a modification. This process occurs unexpectedly, and at least in one case (University of California, Los Angeles), after second interviews and negotiations. Although clearly based on a small sample size, these observations have implications for the entire field of academic jobhontology. I am continuing my studies to verify my hunch that the frequency of these job modifications is increasing.

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