

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The Hartford Courant, 4 March 2006, p. A9

Evolution Illustrated

I read with alarm the article on the growing problem of bacterial resistance to antibiotics [news story, Feb. 26, "Staph Infections Seen As Growing Threat"]. I wondered what the detractors of evolution and advocates of teaching "intelligent design" would make of this.

The origin and growing number of resistant bacterial strains in less than one human generation is an unfortunate, but nonetheless perfect, example of the fact of ongoing evolution. It also illustrates the deceptively simple process of natural selection in creating resistant strains: Kill off the susceptible bacteria and all that are left to reproduce are the resistant ones.

Schoolchildren need this kind of information to make informed choices in daily life. However, I am not one to force my beliefs on others.

I suggest that those who advocate teaching intelligent design in public schools voluntarily refrain from using modern antibiotics. Because they do not accept the reality or centrality of evolution, the form of penicillin first used clinically in 1941 should be adequate for their family's medical needs. My prediction is that in a few generations the question of teaching religious views in public schools will be moot—who would be left to make the argument?

KURT SCHWENK
Storrs

The writer is a professor of ecology and evolutionary biology at the University of Connecticut.