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Soybean Foods—The Good, Bad, and Ugly

To the Editor:

I read with great interest the review article on the cholesterol-lowering effects of soybean foods.¹ Soybean foods in the form of soy milk and tofu have been the main staple foods in China for thousands of years. There has been a recent surge of interest in soy milk as a health food in the Western countries not only for its anticancer,² antihypertensive,³ and antihyperlipidemic⁴ properties but as a natural alternative to hormone replacement therapy.⁵ The latter has attracted special attention in recent months in view of the disquieting findings from the Women's Health Initiative trial, which demonstrated an increased incidence of cardiovascular events and breast cancer in women on hormone replacement therapy.⁶

On the other hand, exclusive use of soy milk in infants may lead to hypocalcemic tetany.⁷ Even calcium-fortified soy milk does not constitute a calcium source comparable to cow milk.⁸ Soy formula may also complicate management

of congenital hypothyroidism: infants fed soy formula have prolonged increase of thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH) when compared to infants fed on nonsoy formula; and these infants need close monitoring of free thyroxine and TSH measurements, because they may need increased levothyroxine doses to achieve normal thyroid function tests.⁹

Finally, soy milk was reported recently to cause subtherapeutic international normalized ratio (INR).¹⁰ Because of the widespread use of warfarin in the management of patients with atrial fibrillation, coronary artery disease, congestive heart failure, and strokes, and the increasing popularity of complementary or alternative medicine in this country,¹¹ every practitioner should be on the alert for such possible interactions where unexpected alteration of the INR is encountered in any patient on warfarin who has otherwise been under good anticoagulant control.¹²

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Web of Science: Index Not as Useful as It Appears

To the Editor:

I feel that I must respond to Alper Sevinc's original communication. The Science Citation Index produced by ISI and now owned by Thomson is not as useful as it first appears. Firstly, Sevinc mentions that the index is "based on the assumption that influential research is widely cited."¹ Influential in what way? Is the article being refuted, corrected, praised? The index only indicates numbers of citations, not the reasons for them. A contentious article may only attract criticism. Secondly, the Impact Factor (IF) of a journal does not necessarily indicate quali-