Microbiology Comment provides a platform for readers of *Microbiology* to communicate their personal observations and opinions in a more informal way than through the submission of papers.

Most of us feel, from time to time, that other authors have not acknowledged the work of our own or other groups or have omitted to interpret important aspects of their own data. Perhaps we have observations that, although not sufficient to merit a full paper, add a further dimension to one published by others. In other instances we may have a useful piece of methodology that we would like to share.

The Editors hope that readers will take full advantage of this section and use it to raise matters that hitherto have been confined to a limited audience.

Jon Saunders
Editor-in-Chief

► GUIDELINES

Communications should be in the form of letters and should be brief and to the point. A single small Table or Figure may be included, as may a limited number of references (cited in the text by numbers, and listed in alphabetical order at the end of the letter). A short title (fewer than 50 characters) should be provided.

Approval for publication rests with the Editor-in-Chief, who reserves the right to edit letters and/or to make a brief reply. Other interested persons may also be invited to reply. The Editors of *Microbiology* do not necessarily agree with the views expressed in **Microbiology Comment**.

Contributions should be addressed to the Editor-in-Chief via the Editorial Office.

Cosying up to MoCo

Recently I received a request for a strain of *Aspergillus nidulans* carrying *cnxC20* (1), a cryosensitive mutation affecting the synthesis of the molybdenum-containing cofactor (MoCo) common to nitrate reductase and purine hydroxylases I and II. As our *cnxC20* strains had not been used for 15+ years, I considered it necessary to check partially the growth properties of revived cultures before distribution. This highlighted a minor error in the 1982 publication describing *cnxC20* (1), correction of which has a potentially interesting ramification. Contrary to the '–' score shown for growth of *cnxC20* strains on nitrate at 25 °C in Table 1 of that publication, *cnxC20* strains do utilize nitrate at 25 °C, albeit markedly more poorly than wild-type strains. The thus corrected Table 1 data clearly indicate that the mutant phenotype of *cnxC20* is more extreme under growth conditions requiring purine hydroxylase II activity (nicotinate as nitrogen source or hypoxanthine as nitrogen source in the presence of nicotinate to induce purine hydroxylase II and allopurinol to inhibit purine hydroxylase I completely) than under growth conditions requiring purine hydroxylase I activity (hypoxanthine as nitrogen source) and least extreme under growth conditions requiring nitrate reductase activity (nitrate as nitrogen source). Assuming that synthesis of MoCo remains constant over this range of growth conditions, the differing stringency of the *cnxC20* phenotype indicates a hierarchy of requirement for MoCo; least

on nitrate and greatest on nicotinate or hypoxanthine in the presence of nicotinate and allopurinol. A plausible explanation would be that nitrate reductase is best at cosying up to MoCo (i.e. has greatest affinity for MoCo) and that purine hydroxylase II is the most reticent suitor (assuming, of course, equal MoCo-binding stoichiometries in each case).

Previous work with a thermosensitive *cnxH* mutation suggested that the quantitative requirement of purine hydroxylases I and II for MoCo might be more stringent than that of nitrate reductase (2–4). Thus the phenotype of a cryosensitive *cnxC* allele corroborates and extends a proposal based on work with a thermosensitive *cnxH* allele.

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