things clear'. He refused to consider restarting antipsychotic drugs and over the course of the next three weeks, with earplugs in situ, he improved socially in his work and in his relationship with his parents. This amelioration proved but temporary, however. His decline was heralded by the announcement 'Half of my brain is linked to the Moon'. Following this he developed bizarre quasi-religious ideas and delusions of control by outside influences. It was necessary to readmit him to an in-patient ward where he eventually improved again on phenothiazines.

In addition to this man I have personally seen two other male schizophrenics who have worn earplugs during exacerbation of their illnesses and who claimed they felt better for doing so. Both of these differed from the case I have described in that auditory hallucinations formed a prominent part of their complaints. Conversations with colleagues who mention similar cases suggest that the phenomenon is not rare.

It may well be that the wearing of earplugs is a product of the disordered logic of the schizophrenic. Auditory hallucinations are perceived as arising from outside the head and cotton-wool plugs are used to keep them out. The reason for a non-hallucinated patient wearing earplugs comes less readily, but it could perhaps be explained away as simply another example of a pointless irrational schizophrenic affectation. The phenomenon, however, bears an alternative explanation which would make the exercise seem less futile. It may be that the schizophrenic, during the early stages of his illness or during an exacerbation, finds himself overwhelmed by sensory input from his surroundings. He seeks ways to reduce this and may temporarily succeed in relieving his subjective distress and in improving his performance. It is tempting to suggest that this was true of the patient I have described as well as others like him who adopt the seemingly eccentric habit of pluggings up their ears.

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Unfortunately, in the paper by Drs Bond, Cundall and Falloon entitled 'Monoamine Oxidase (MAO) of Platelets, Plasma, Lymphocytes and Granulocytes in Schizophrenia' (*Journal*, April 1979, **134**, 360–5) both the address for reprints and the authors' address were omitted from the end of the paper. Drs Bond and Cundall are working at St John's Hospital, Stone, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire and this is the address for reprint requests.

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