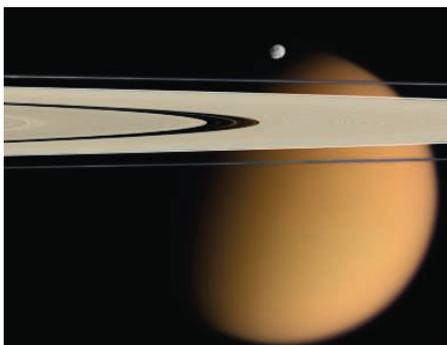


Mooning About: Cassini Turns 10

NASA's Cassini mission celebrated its tenth year last week by releasing images of the solar system's preening beauty, Saturn, and its fawning entourage of moons and rings. Eagle-eyed researchers spotted "moonlets" plowing through the delicate rings and reported the results in this week's issue of *Nature*.

The moonlets measure just 30 to 70 meters across, but most of the debris in the rings measures less than 10 meters, so the moonlets leave a traceable wake. Saturn's rings vary in thickness from about 100 meters to slightly more than 1 km.



In the image, Epimetheus (116 km across) floats just above Titan (5150 km), the largest of Saturn's moons. The light-colored streaks in the ring may be caused by moonlets. The dark-colored section in the middle of the ring is the 325-km-wide Encke gap, probably caused by a gravitational resonance.

Cassini has mapped 60% of Titan's northern hemisphere, which is home to lakes, rivers, and seas of liquid methane and ethane. The southern half is slated to be mapped next.

Golden Oldies

Spending your working hours pondering how our bodies break down as we get older might sound a little depressing. But research on aging is booming, and the field's good health is on display at the blog **NET WATCH** Ouroboros, which is named for a symbol of endlessness. Three postdocs from leading aging research labs offer their takes on the latest results from conferences and the literature. In a little more than a year, the authors have touched on topics as diverse as the evolution of whale menopause, cell death during muscle aging, and a potential new blood test for

Alzheimer's disease. The site is aimed at researchers, but it can also help beginners get up to speed. >>

ouroboros.wordpress.com

Prescription Hazards

"Don't touch this stuff."

"Take anywhere."

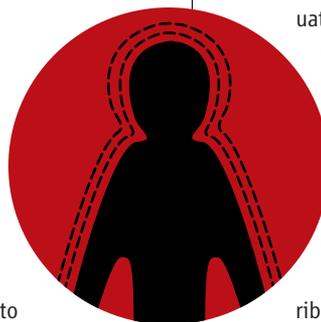
"Chills or shaking."

"Having an experience with God."

What is the meaning of this icon? In an outpatient clinic survey, researchers showed common prescription labels to 253 patients and asked, "What does this mean to you?" For this icon—which means "for external use only"—46% came up with answers such as those above.

Inscrutable, inconsistent drug labeling was the topic of a meeting this month at the Institute of Medicine in Washington, D.C.

"Nobody regulates warning labels," says Terry



Davis, a professor of medicine at the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center in Shreveport, who conducted the survey. Nor is there any standard terminology for directing patients on how to use their prescribed medications. Even instructions as simple as "take two tablets twice daily" will stump college grad-

uates, says health services researcher Michael Wolf of Northwestern

University in Evanston, Illinois.

With the average American over 65 taking eight kinds of medications and ordering 27 refills a year, the possibilities for misunderstandings are legion.

"It's amazing we've gotten away with presenting the most horrible information for so long," says

Wolf. Meeting attendees agreed that standardization is long overdue but said voluntary efforts would be preferable to more regulations. Target is one store chain that is taking action, with "ClearRX," a pill bottle storable on its top with a wraparound bottom and flat front offering more surface area for explicit instructions.

New Value in Old Casts

Plaster reproductions of Maya and Aztec carvings, which have languished for a century in storage at Harvard University's Peabody Museum, are attracting new interest from scholars now that many of the originals have been eroded or destroyed.

Curators, students, and conservationists are pitching in with vacuums, brushes, and dry sponges in a 5-month project to clean and catalog 650 casts for study. Some of the molded copies are up to 2 meters tall and weigh almost 230 kilograms. Made by Harvard scholars in the 1890s, they reproduce hieroglyphs from 25 archaeological sites in Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras, as well as images of rulers and rituals. They were used in exhibitions, such as the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago, and later stashed away.

"For a long time, nobody thought that they were important because they weren't the originals and were placed in less-than-optimal conditions," says museum spokesperson Pamela Gerardi. Now, however, the original monuments have eroded from rain and tropical heat; some have been stolen or smashed up to construct walls.

