

BY THE NUMBERS

23,000 Air miles (and carbon footprint) the average astronomer logs each year traveling to meetings and observatories, according to astrophysicist Philip Marshall of the University of Oxford.

100 meters Estimated thickness of snow on parts of Saturn's moon Enceladus, according to data presented last week at a planetary sciences meeting.

CFS Researcher Fired

Judy Mikovits, who for 2 years has championed the controversial theory that XMRV, a mouse retrovirus, has links to chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), was fired on 29 September. The next day, a blogger raised questions about a slide Mikovits presented at a scientific meeting, triggering a probe by *Science* of a figure in a paper it published by



Mikovits

Mikovits and colleagues in October 2009.

The Whittemore Peterson Institute for Neuro-Immune Disease (WPI), a private organization in Reno, Nevada, devoted to CFS research and treatment, said it fired Mikovits for withholding a cell line from a co-worker. In a termination letter dated 30 September, Annette Whittemore, CEO of WPI, charged Mikovits with being "insubordinate and insolent." Mikovits, who was immediately locked out of her lab, responded that she withheld the cell line because the co-worker failed to take her direction.

That same day, a blog written by graduate student Abbie Smith at the University of Oklahoma, Oklahoma City, noted that Mikovits had presented a slide at a recent CFS meeting that looked identical to an image in the 2009 *Science* paper. But the slide had different patient numbers and unique experimental conditions. *Science* Executive Editor Monica Bradford said the journal was contacting the authors to review the description of the slide in the original paper.

Mikovits and collaborator Francis Ruscetti of the National Cancer Institute in Frederick, Maryland, say patient numbers were changed to protect privacy and no wrongdoing occurred. http://scim.ag/_Mikovits

Random Sample

Following Berlusconi's Risqué Gaze

If Silvio Berlusconi leers at someone to his right, Italy's conservative voters will tend to glance in that direction, too, as if to see what he's looking at. Right-wing Italians seem to naturally track the gaze of those in power, says Marco Tullio Liuzza, a social neuroscientist at the Sapienza University of Rome.

Liuzza and colleagues organized 28 subjects into right- and left-leaning voters, and sat them in front of a computer screen displaying a range of Italian politicians. The images included Prime Minister Berlusconi and left-leaning Antonio Di Pietro. The subjects were instructed to pay attention to the color of a square positioned between the politician's eyes, and to look left or right, depending on its color. But while the subjects waited for the square to change, the team also quickly shifted the gaze of the politician in the image, making the image appear to glance right or left.

Right-wing voters were more likely to follow the direction of Berlusconi's gaze than Di Pietro's and would follow Berlusconi's gaze even when the box color instructed the voters to look in the opposite direction, the team reported in a study published online in *PLoS ONE* last month. That result, they

suggested, is similar to behavior observed in monkeys in which subordinate primates follow the gaze of dominant monkeys much more than those big cheeses returned the favor. Left-leaning voters, however, were less inclined to follow Di Pietro's gaze, Liuzza says.

But there's an important caveat: This study was conducted in 2009, long before Berlusconi became embroiled in numerous sex scandals, Liuzza notes. "It would be interesting to see if this effect would disappear now that the confidence in Berlusconi's coalition has drastically dropped."



Berlusconi

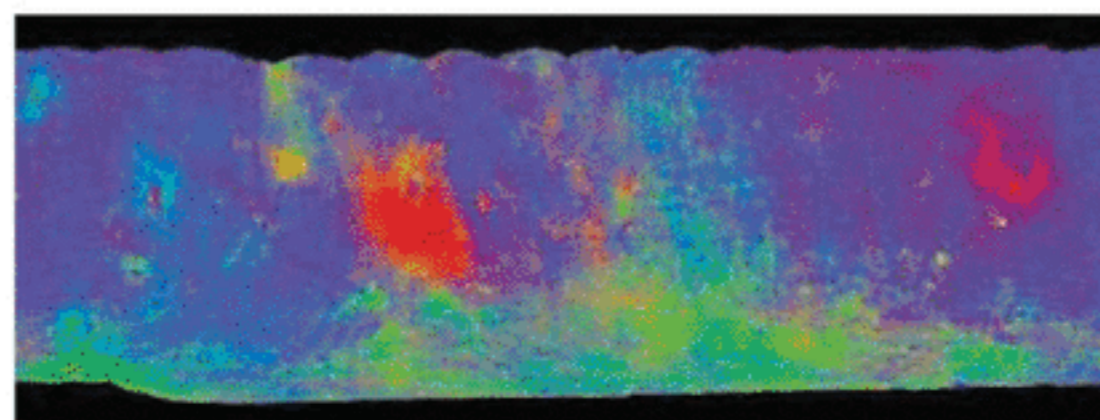


Di Pietro

FINDINGS

Asteroid Vesta Exceeds Expectations

The 529-kilometer-diameter asteroid Vesta is revealing even more geologic diversity than scientists had expected. They knew that a collision with another asteroid had splashed off three kinds of rock that still land on Earth as



Full color. Vesta's myriad minerals.

meteorites. And Vesta's overall spectral color, as returned by NASA's orbiting Dawn spacecraft, matches that of these Vesta meteorites, Dawn team members reported 3 October at a planetary science meeting in Nantes, France. But rather than a monotonously uniform surface homogenized by impact cratering over the eons, the first up-close look at the asteroid reveals a full palette of mineral "colors"

(mapped in false color reflecting the wide range of rock compositions). Researchers will now have to sort out how more than 4 billion years of impacts—including one at the south pole that nearly destroyed the asteroid—reshaped Vesta after it developed a crust, mantle, and core much like Earth's.