for the patient's delusion that "Half of my brain is linked to the Moon".

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DEAR SIR,

Dr McGuffin's letter (Journal, June 1979, 134, 651) includes incidental observations of the effects of wearing earplugs upon the condition of schizophrenic patients. In particular, he quotes the patient who found that wearing earplugs helped him to 'hear more clear' (sic).

Our own research provides a rationale for improvements in speech comprehension as a result of wearing an earplug in one ear or the other but not in both (Green, 1978a; 1978b; 1978c; Green et al., 1979). This research shows that schizophrenics suffer from defective information transfer between the cerebral hemispheres and that the transfer deficit interferes with speech comprehension. Acute schizophrenics with left hemisphere speech representation are significantly better at understanding speech presented to the right ear than to the left. More important, however, is that they are normally able to comprehend speech presented to the right ear only at least twice as well as under normal conditions of binaural speech reception. The wearing of an earplug in the left ear, therefore, leads to significantly increased levels of speech comprehension compared with everyday binaural listening. In cases of right hemisphere speech, the effect is similar but in the reverse direction and a right earplug would be expected to increase speech comprehension.

An additional effect of a single earplug which we are investigating is a decreased frequency of auditory hallucinations which re-appear if the patient removes the earplug. For further information about the experimental work leading to the discovery of these effects, reference may be made to the following articles which are available from the author on request.

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References
