Remembrance of things past
There was more to Jackson’s vision than a visual illusion. Nevertheless, it was seen as a movement where no one else did, if objects seemed to rotate and transmute in space it was partly because in his eyes they did. For as long as he could remember Jackson had been afflicted with hallucinatory spells. They came without warning and could be as short as an instant or as long as several minutes. In the late 1940s after years of silence even with Lee he declared an affliction to Roger Wilcox. “With his eyes open wide, in a normal situation, he would suddenly begin to see all these swirling images,” Wilcox remembers Jackson telling him, “a swirling of lines and images, swirling tangles of lines. It was like real . . . He wanted to know if there was something wrong with his eyes or with his sanity.”

Having done some research on visual phenomena in connection with an invention, Wilcox reassured him, “It’s just a temporary malfunction in the optic nerve. It’s inside your head, not in your eyes.” Jackson was relieved. “At least there’s nothing wrong with my eyes,” he said. (Later, Wilcox researched the problem in medical and optical journals and concluded on the basis of Jackson’s description that it was just a temporary malfunction in the optic chiasm, triggered by a malfunction of the perceptual circuits in the occipital lobe of the brain and projecting to the retina.) The generally accepted medical term for this painless ocular disturbance is an ocular migraine. (Steven Nafeh and Gregory White Smith. Jackson Pollock: An American Saga.+Aiken, South Carolina: Woodward and White Inc, 1989:538–9.)

Bacteria in biofilms is a problem in medicine
Recent evidence suggests that bacteria do not in fact spend much time as isolated cells. Rather they adhere to various wetted surfaces in communities. In these complex and tenacious communities, many bacteria may be in areas in which antibiotics cannot penetrate these biofilms. Moreover, in biofilms, known as biofilms, bacteria can be found in the optic nerve. It’s inside your head, not in your eyes. Jackson was relieved. “At least there’s nothing wrong with my eyes,” he said. (Later, Wilcox researched the problem in medical and optical journals and concluded on the basis of Jackson’s description that it was just a temporary malfunction in the optic chiasm, triggered by a malfunction of the perceptual circuits in the occipital lobe of the brain and projecting to the retina.) The generally accepted medical term for this painless ocular disturbance is an ocular migraine.

Glucosamine sulphate is superior to ibuprofen in treating osteoarthritis
Glucosamine sulphate has been used for the treatment of osteoarthritis in veterinary medicine for more than a decade. It has only been used extensively for human patients during the last few years. Only a few well controlled studies have been completed in human patients. Now in a controlled randomised double blind study in Canada glucosamine sulphate has been compared to ibuprofen in the treatment of the pain and disability associated with temporomandibular joint osteoarthritis. In this study of 45 patients glucosamine sulphate had a significantly greater influence in reducing pain during function and the effect of the pain reduction lasted longer than in those patients treated with ibuprofen. No significant side effects of glucosamine sulphate were noted in this study. (Journal of Rheumatology 2001;28:1547–55.)

Marijuana can trigger myocardial infarction
Smoking marijuana is known to have significant haemodynamic consequences including a dose dependent increase in heart rate, supine hypertension, and postural hypertension. In the determination of myocardial infarction onset study from Boston it was demonstrated that the risk of myocardial infarction was 4½ times greater than normal in the 60 minutes immediately for marijuana users. The elevated risk rapidly decreased thereafter. The mechanism whereby myocardial infarction may be associated with marijuana has yet to be determined. (Circulation 2001;103:2805–9.)

Obesity’s heavy toll
Obesity which can cause heart disease and diabetes leads to 300 000 deaths annually in the United States, second only to the 400 000 that are associated with tobacco use. Obesity accounts for 5.5–7% of the total US healthcare cost. At the 11th European Congress held in Vienna this year researchers demonstrated that about 30–40% of all cancer cases stem from excessive weight. A successful strategy to reduce obesity would appear to have the potential to significantly reduce the risk of cancer. (Scientific American 2001;285:22.)

How common is symptomless deep vein thrombosis during air travel?
The problem of deep vein thrombosis during air travel is being reported with increased frequency. In a study from Lister Hospital in London 89 men and 142 women over 50 years of age with no history of thromboembolic problems were studied. One group wore elastic compression stockings below the knee and the other group did not. All of the studied subjects made air journeys lasting more than 8 hours per flight and returned to the United Kingdom within 6 weeks. Ultrasonography demonstrated that 10% of the study group had developed symptomless deep vein thrombosis in the calf. None of these passengers had worn elastic compression stockings. Four patients who did wear these stockings developed superficial vein thrombophlebitis. Deep vein thrombosis appears to be a relatively common complication of long haul airline travel. Wearing elastic compression stockings may reduce the problem significantly. (Lancet 2001;357:1485–9.)

Cataract extraction is related to coronary heart disease in women
Oxidative damage to proteins in the human lens is believed to be important in the aetiology of age related cataract. Because free radical mediated oxidative damage to life of proteins may accelerate atherosclerosis, a study from Harvard Medical School investigated the hypothesis that the development of a cataract might be a marker for atherosclerosis and the subsequent risk of coronary heart disease. This study was performed in women and, over a 10 year follow up period in over 60 000 patients, a positive association between cataract extraction and coronary heart disease was demonstrated. This association was even stronger in women with a history of diabetes. (American Journal of Epidemiology 2000;153:875–81.)

Thunderstorms may precede epidemics of asthma
A case-controlled study performed in six towns in south eastern Australia has demonstrated that thunderstorms were detected on 33% of days when epidemics of asthma occurred as opposed to only 3% on controlled days. These findings are consistent with the hypothesis that some epidemics of exacerbations of asthma occur because of a high concentration of allergic particles associated with a downdraft from a thunderstorm. This appears to be a common cause of exacerbations during the pollen season. (Thorax 2001;56:648–71.)