What the 'cold fusion' debacle has revealed

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"Cold fusion" has a serious legacy problem. Back in 1989, researchers announced that they had demonstrated the phenomenon—a nuclear reaction producing excess heat at room temperature—that promised to revolutionize clean energy. Soon after, they were ridiculed for the assertion. *Chemical & Engineering News*, the weekly newsmagazine of the American Chemical Society, reports how the debacle scarred science and has tainted the continued search for similar energy technologies.

Since the initial claim imploded, the general consensus in the scientific community has been that the phenomenon simply isn't possible. But a few researchers have independently reported similar experiments that have produced excess heat, if in underwhelming amounts. But consistently reproducing results has been an elusive goal. No one has put forth an accepted theory that would explain such energy generation. No commercial product based on the effect has successfully made it to the market. And those pursuing commercial opportunities have often come off as hucksters, further dampening interest in low-energy nuclear reactions or similar research.

Enter Brilliant Light Power (BLP). The New Jersey-based company claims that it has found a way to shrink hydrogen atoms into "hydrinos," a term it has coined and trademarked. The process generates a huge amount of energy, says BLP founder Randell Mills, and the company is poised to release a commercial device next year that can harness this reaction to power homes and businesses at a fraction of the cost of current energy technologies. Many scientists harbor serious doubts about the device and expect yet another disappointment.

More information: *Chemical & Engineering News*, cen.acs.org/articles/94/i44/Co … n-died-25-years.html

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