Complexities of Basic Science

To the Editor:

"Anesthesiology" publishes an eclectic and attractive mixture of articles, allowing the well-served reader to enjoy a broad commentary concerning advances in anesthesia in its many subspecialty aspects. The science behind most articles lies within the general reader's domain of understanding and comprehension. But not all articles are immediately accessible. The content of others, particularly those concerning basic science research, can pose a quandary. Often, such articles are accessible only to those with specialized knowledge. By its nature, basic science research exists in an isolated sphere. But is it inevitable that the journal's readership be polarized into those who understand basic science articles and the rest who unsuccessfully attempt to understand or who do not attempt in the first place.

The essence of easy access to complicated science is richness in description and explanation. A synthesis of information from many sources can introduce the general reader to concepts driving the research and furthermore permit the reader to locate the overall context. The common reader is entirely dependent upon such basic guidance, and an introductory preamble can serve not only to inform but to also capture the reader's imagination. In this way, the reader may join the investigators in the excitement of the scientific chase.

Anesthesiology's basic science reports do not always include the distinct and determined preamble necessary to entice the hesitant reader. Instead, the common reader finds dense scientific text with uncomfortable English usage, an economy of background information, and an often absence of explanatory cartoons and diagrams other than those involved in the portrayal of results. The latter, the visual image that lies at the heart of information conveyance in contemporary society, is missed as a mechanism to illustrate ideas. But in their defence, authors of the basic science article may generously but not correctly assume that the reading audience already possesses the knowledge necessary to interpret and understand their article. In all, the distinct pleasure of reading basic science reports remains beyond easy access by the journal's wider audience.

Competing Interests
The author declares no competing interests.

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