CORRESPONDENCE

Unfortunately, the methods chosen by the authors do not allow us to determine whether the critical factor in hypoxic apnea is the level of sympathetic tone or simply the absolute blood pressure. It would be interesting to see whether hypoxic apnea occurs in rabbits in which hypotension is induced by a nonsympatholytic mechanism (hypovolemia, sodium nitroprusside) as well as mechanisms involving blockade of the sympathetic system (trimethaphan, epidural anesthesia). Similarly, it would be interesting to see whether hypoxic apnea could be avoided in rabbits undergoing epidural anesthesia using nonsympathomimetic interventions (volume loading, vagolytics) rather than administration of adrenergic agonists. Although it is certainly possible that the critical factor is oxygen delivery to the brain, as mediated by arterial oxygen content and arterial blood pressure, the authors' methods do not rule out the possibility of specific, sympathetic modulation of respiratory drive mediated through the thoracic sympathetic system.

The authors are to be commended for shedding light on the issue of unexpected cardiorespiratory arrest in patients undergoing spinal or epidural anesthesia. At the same time, their work raises provocative questions about apnea in infants and control of respiratory drive.

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Predicting Long-term Postoperative Cardiovascular Outcomes

To the Editor—Referring to the article of Badner et al., Dr. Mangano encourages assessment of the value of perioperative observations and interventions for predicting quality of life, event-free survival, and cost. Badner et al. further this goal by relating postoperative signs and symptoms to longer-term risk of myocardial infarction (MI) and associated mortality. This valuable data set could provide even further insight into the risk profile for MI and MI-related mortality among surgical patients by a more complete analysis of the available information.

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