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References


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Color of Compressed Gas Cylinders

To the Editor.—Reading the potentially disastrous case of an intraabdominal fire by Greilich et al.1 prompted me to immediately call a major medical gas supplier here in Australia to check whether such a dangerous gas cylinder was available. As in the United States, routinely available Carbogen (5% CO₂ in 95% O₂) has a different pin index to 100% CO₂. Other mixtures of CO₂ and O₂ can be supplied on request, but would normally be fitted with a bulb-nosed industrial-type valve, unless a medical-type pin-indexed valve was requested. Also as in the United States, if such a medical valve was requested, mixtures with 7% CO₂ or greater would be fitted with pin positions identical those of a 100% CO₂ cylinder. However, the guidelines also specify that the color of the body of the cylinder should be that of the predominant gas (i.e., >50% concentration), and the shoulder of the cylinder should be colored that of the “minor” gas. With these guidelines, 14% CO₂ in 86% oxygen would look more like an oxygen cylinder but would only fit a CO₂ pin-indexed yoke. Although still potentially dangerous, this almost certainly would have been safer than the safety features described in the report (i.e., a small green collar plus a label). One also wonders why such a mixture with a medical pin index existed in the hospital in the first place.

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Reference

1. Greilich PE, Greilich NB, Froelich EG: Intraabdominal fire during laparoscopic cholecystectomy. Anesthesiology 1995; 83:871-4

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In Reply.—We are delighted to respond to the letter from our Australian colleague, Priestley, regarding safety features in the packaging of the medical gases. Following the Australian guidelines, our hazardous mixture of the 86% O₂/14% CO₂ would have been packaged in a green cylinder with gray striping on the collar rather than the reverse.1 Theoretically, our error could have been averted by

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