Correspondence

The First Endotracheal Intubation

To the Editor: — In a recent clinical report, Katz and Berci\(^1\) stated that Vesalius in 1543 reported “... that a pregnant pig was kept alive by blowing through a reed inserted into the trachea...” and that “This is perhaps the first example of ventilation via the trachea.” The first intubation of the larynx and the trachea was actually reported at the beginning of the second millennium. Avicenna (980–1037) describes it with the following words: “...a golden or a silvorn or from a similar material made tubus can be sometimes inserted into the neck...”\(^2\) It is also interesting to note that Avicenna preferred tracheal intubation to tracheotomy. Only when laryngotracheal intubation fails to improve the patient’s condition should tracheotomy be performed.

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Management of a Difficult Airway in Obstetrics

To the Editor: — We have also encountered the problem addressed by Drs. Marx and Finster,\(^1\) the paralyzed patient whose trachea the anesthesiologist cannot intubate and whom he cannot ventilate. A recent, near-disastrous experience at UCSD suggests that their third recommendation, the presence of a sterile tracheostomy tray or the tube device described by Stinson, may lead to a false sense of security.

Few obstetricians are skilled or experienced in emergency tracheotomy; tracheotomy is made particularly hazardous and difficult by urgency, the venous distention of pregnancy, and the same difficulties that made intubation impossible.

The Stinson device, a 12-gauge intravenous cannula connected to a resuscitation bag, delivers a gas flow (70 mL/sec measured by Med Science 570 Wedge Spirometer) inadequate to establish normal alveolar ventilation. I am unaware of any report of its successful use to ventilate a paralyzed patient.

Spoerel et al.\(^2,3\) have demonstrated effective needle transtracheal ventilation in paralyzed patients, utilizing a 16-gauge intravenous cannula intermittently connected to the 50-psi hospital piped oxygen supply. Control may be effected by a thumb-operated valve, available as a Sanders Jet Ventilator\(^*\) or readily fabri-

Fig. 1. Emergency jet ventilator.