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VERSERS toward the transverse sinus in the cranium through the left IJV, adding to the blood flow at the confluent sinus and draining through the right IJV (fig. 1). In other words, the blood in the right IJV came from the entire brain and left upper extremity. Because it has been reported that occlusion of both internal jugular veins caused cerebral dysfunction,2,3 when the left innominate vein was ligated during open heart surgery, the catheter in the right IJV was promptly removed to avoid complications that might occur if thrombus developed in the lumen of the right IJV.

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Protamine: A Cardiotoxic Agent with Negative Inotropism

To the Editor:—Morel et al. provided an excellent study on adverse cardiopulmonary effects of protamine.1 We agree that the degree of the response to protamine correlated with the rate of protamine administration. However, we do not understand why the authors concluded that it was the rate of generation of heparin–protamine complexes, rather than the extensive amount of circulating free protamine, that initiated the sequence of adverse responses. We think that either one is possible when protamine is infused rapidly.

In a recent paper we described the direct effects of protamine on myocardial contractility in isolated rabbit heart.2 The results showed that protamine infusions exerted significant dose-related progressive negative inotropic effects at concentrations of 0.01, 0.1, and 0.25 mg/ml. At 0.5 mg/ml, it caused almost complete loss of contractility, with peak developed tension of only 6% of control value or total arrest despite continuous electrical stimulation. A similar pattern of changes was noted in dT/dt. The severely depressed myocardial septa following the large dose of protamine (0.5 mg/ml) developed intermittent electromechanical uncoupling. They either failed to recover any contraction at all (two cases) or took 35 ± 4 min to recover to the initial level.

The pathophysiologic mechanism to develop the adverse effects of protamine infusion remains controversial3 and may be multifactorial. Our study suggested that the cardiotoxic depressant effect of protamine in large doses may play a role, particularly in rapid infusion. More studies need to be done. We also found that heparin was a myocardial depressant but was not cardiotoxic,4 and that heparin–protamine complexes caused less myocardial depression than did protamine itself.†

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