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Hespan® and Air Embolism

To the Editor:—Hespan® (6% hetastarch, DuPont, Wilmington, DE) was supplied for many years in 500-mL bags with no air in the bag. It is now supplied in bags containing approximately 60 mL of air. Because Hespan® is commonly administered with the aid of a pressure infusion device, I draw the reader's attention to the need to prevent venous air embolism when using Hespan®.

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In Reply:—Recently, Du Pont Pharma and McGaw introduced Hespan® (6% hetastarch in 0.9% sodium chloride injection) in a new Excel® container. The previous bag did not contain significant amounts of air, whereas the new bag does. This does not affect the quality of the product, but the air may affect how it is administered. As with all infusion products, care should be taken not to introduce air into the infusion tubing when using the product. If administration is controlled by a pumping device, care must be taken to discontinue pumping action before the container runs dry, or air embolism may result. If the product is administered by pressure infusion, all air should be withdrawn or expelled from the bag through the medication port before infusion.

The package insert for Hespan® states, "If administration is by pressure infusion, all air should be withdrawn or expelled from the bag through the medication port prior to infusion."

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