Christoph H. Kindler, M.D.
Staff Anesthesiologist
Manfred D. Seeberger, M.D.
Staff Anesthesiologist
Department of Anesthesia
University of Basel, Kantonsspital,
CH-4031 Basel, Switzerland

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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% CO_2 in 95% O_2) has a different pin index to 100% CO_2. Other mixtures of CO_2 and O_2 can be supplied on request, but would normally be fitted with a bull-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% CO_2 or greater would be fitted with pin positions identical those of a 100% CO_2 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% CO_2 in 86% oxygen would look more like an oxygen cylinder but would only fit a CO_2 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.

Mark Priestley, M.B.B.S., F.A.N.Z.C.A.
Staff Specialist
Department of Anaesthesia
Westmead Hospital
Hawkesbury Road
Westmead 2145 NSW
Sydney, Australia

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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% O_2/14% CO_2 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