

## CORRESPONDENCE

2. Balsler JR, Martinez EA, Winters BD, Perdue PW, Clarke AW, Huang W, Tomaselli GF, Dorman T, Campbell K, Lipsett P, Breslow MJ, Rosenfeld BA:  $\beta$ -adrenergic blockade accelerates conversion of post

operative supraventricular tachyarrhythmias. *ANESTHESIOLOGY* 1998; 89: 1052-9

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*In Reply:*—We appreciate Dr. Cohen's thoughtful remarks regarding consent in emergency procedures would like to offer a few clarifications in specific reference to our trial.

Dr. Cohen's concern about the waiver of prospective consent focuses on the notion that the complication under treatment in our study (postoperative AF) was not "sudden (or) unanticipated." Although postoperative supraventricular tachycardia is relatively common in cardiac and thoracic surgery patients (rates approach 40%), our study was directed mainly at a general surgical population in which the incidence is far lower. We estimate that less than 2% of the gastrointestinal/genitourinary surgery patients, who comprised our largest subgroup (table 1), developed postoperative atrial fibrillation. Although reasonable people might not agree on exactly what incidence satisfies the criterion for "unanticipated," it would be necessary to interview thousands of patients preoperatively to obtain a worthwhile sample size under these conditions. We would also reaffirm that postoperative

atrial arrhythmias do occur suddenly and, in our view, require immediate rate control intervention given the risk of myocardial ischemia with rapid heart rates.

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## Plagiarism and Authorship

*To the Editor:*—The recent example of wholesale plagiarism that graced the pages of the August 1998 issue of *ANESTHESIOLOGY*<sup>1</sup> raises the question of academic honesty in addition to the shameful lifting by the junior author of 40% of the article from a review course lecture by Dr. Cottrell. In his editorial response that accompanied the authors' retraction in the December 1998 issue,<sup>2</sup> Editor-in-Chief Dr. Todd rightly decried the plagiarism. He then essentially exonerated the senior author, however, insisting that "one author may not be aware of plagiarism committed by a fellow author. In fact, it is extremely difficult for one author to defend himself from such actions committed by a fellow author." Actually, it is very easy—do not put your name on someone else's work!

The essence of plagiarism is the appropriation of the intellectual product of one person by another. How is this different from the granting or demanding of authorship by senior authors for the work product of their juniors? In this case, the senior author, Dr. Kirsch, was asked to write an editorial. He delegated the task to a junior colleague, Dr. Bhardwaj, and then took equal authorship of the finished work product. Does it really matter that the work product he appropriated was actually that of Dr. Cottrell and not, as he thought, Dr. Bhardwaj?

The ubiquitous habit of senior authors taking credit for the work product of their junior colleagues is *exactly equivalent to plagiarism*. They are happy to steal (excuse me, share) the credit, but, of course, if there are later charges of intellectual hanky panky, they claim lack of knowledge or responsibility, and only the junior author takes the fall.

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## References

1. Bhardwaj A, Kirsch JR: Anesthetic agents and hypothermia in ischemic brain protection. *ANESTHESIOLOGY* 1998; 89:289-91
2. Todd MM, Bhardwaj A, Kirsch JR: Plagiarism. *ANESTHESIOLOGY* 1998; 89:1307-8

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