Anesthesiologists are CPR Experts!

To the Editor:—The answer to Dr. Garman's editorial question, "Are anesthesiologists experts in cardiopulmonary resuscitation?" is YES. Dr. Garman concludes, unjustifiably from the study by Schwartz et al., that anesthesiologists are not well trained in current CPR practices because, . . . “the majority failed the didactic test.” The American Heart Association's CPR course is a "cookbook" attempt to provide the public with a rote method of CPR, since the public has no background to do otherwise. The language of the test and the questions (e.g., where is the heart located) verify the thrust of this program. In fact, it is demeaning to ask professionals whose entire training is based on the maintenance and restoration of cellular oxygenation to take this test.

Further, the study by Schwartz et al. may contain several flaws. First, they did not correct for the running and fooling factor, which is an attitudinal response to a test held in low regard. Second, the answers to some of the questions asked of test participants would be considered incorrect or immaterial by anesthesiologists. Finally, it is naive to attempt to make something cerebral out of the basic CPR course, because, after one remembers the recommended breathing—compression ratio, then all it takes is stamina (and a lot of people do not have it).

Those of us who have been involved in CPR for years know the immense number of variables in each resuscitation (the manikin has its), and that a rigid approach should not be applied to professionals such as anesthesiologists. The intent of the American Heart Association CPR program was for mass public education and, in that regard, it has done exceedingly well. On the other hand, the dedicated CPR instructors should not wrongly indict an entire specialty in order to add credibility to their good work.

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REFERENCES

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