In reply.—We have read with interest the letter by Hirshman et al., and are frankly somewhat puzzled by the point they are attempting to make.

We are specified specifically for suggesting a relationship between histamine release and cardiovascular effects. To bolster their argument they inappropriately refer to data we published concerning an anaphylactoid reaction following succinylcholine which did not involve significant hypotension. If they would care to re-read the article, they will note that 1,500 ml of lactated Ringer's solution was infused rapidly to avoid hypotension. Nonetheless, there was a rapid and profound decrease in SVR.

The relationship between histamine release, not involving anaphylaxis, and decrease in SVR is certainly significant, as we and others have reported. We agree that our correlation taken as an isolated report does not necessarily imply causation. However, when the effect on SVR can be prevented by histamine antagonists as we reported, it seems reasonable and prudent to conclude a causal relationship exists. We agree that this technique is far from perfect, but it is the classic and universally accepted method of determining causality.

The histamine antagonists had no significant effect on SVR. Furthermore, when heart rate is not affected, comparable results are obtained. We have also obtained the same results when chlorpheniramine is substituted for diphenhydramine and there is no increase in heart rate. The suggestion about atropine borders on the ludicrous.

It appears that Hirshman et al. accept that morphine can decrease SVR, that morphine can cause histamine release, and that histamine can cause a decrease in SVR. We have demonstrated that histamine antagonists prevent much of the decrease in SVR associated with morphine as well as other histamine-releasing drugs. We appear to have a webbed and billed bird that quacks. It might be a Canary in disguise, but it seems more realistic to call it a duck.

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REFERENCES

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Drug Toxicity Should Affect Drug Choice

To the Editor:—The important symposium report, "The Anesthesiology Triad in Obstetrics,"11 concluded "all drugs are toxic if used improperly." Of course, but was that the real point of the symposium? Wasn't it that all drugs are not equally toxic and that it might sometimes make sense to choose a possibly less toxic drug?