In Reply—Although Kubota et al. are correct in pointing out that several reports describing lung collapse during anesthesia secondary to mucus plugging have appeared in the anesthesia literature since 1942,1,4 these cases were distinctly different from the case we described. In contrast to the previous reports describing mainstem bronchus obstruction by mucous plugs following tracheal intubation, our case involved a young, healthy unmedicated outpatient with no preexisting pulmonary disease. In addition, the mucous plugging in our patient occurred prior to tracheal intubation.

The primary objective of our report was to make clinicians aware of the possibility of this life-threatening complication occurring in otherwise healthy outpatients. Because the right lung obstruction in our patient developed coincident with the administration of mivacurium, a known histamine-releasing drug, it is possible that the muscle relaxant was a contributing factor in this case. We strongly disagree with the suggestion that pulmonary collapse during anesthesia is a common problem.

Finally, we agree with Kubota et al. that the straight suction catheter we passed through the tracheal tube may have entered the mainstem bronchus because of the marked mediastinal shift following collapse of the right lung. However, our inability to suction out the mucus plug also may have been due to the solid consistency of the plug. Kubota et al.’s curved-tipped catheter2,11 or the J-shaped catheter12,13 might have been helpful in the management of this case. Unfortunately, these special catheters are not available at our institutions.

Yifeng Ding, M.D.
Research Associate
Department of Anesthesiology
Washington University School of Medicine
660 South Euclid Avenue
St. Louis, Missouri 63110

Paul F. White, Ph.D., M.D.
Professor and McDermott Chair of Anesthesiology
Department of Anesthesiology and Pain Management
University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas
5323 Harry Hines Boulevard
Dallas, Texas 75235-8894

References

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Clever Cure for an Endotracheal Tube Cuff Leak

To the Editor.—Every anesthesiologist has agonized over the problem posed by a leaking endotracheal tube cuff and the risk of exchanging the problem endotracheal tube for a new one. We have evolved a simple and effective solution for defective or broken endotracheal tube cuff one-way valves and pilot balloons. If the endotracheal tube cuff cannot be inflated or will not stay inflated and the problem can be localized to the one-way valve, the pilot balloon, or the distal portion of the inflation tube, this technique will effect a simple, long-term solution.

Cut the inflation tube to remove the defective elements. Cut a