Given the negative connotation of inadvertence, especially in anaesthesia where a lack of attention can be disastrous for our patients, I urge all authors and colleagues to use other, more appropriate, adjectives such as unintentional, accidental, unintended, etc. Unless, of course, the adverse event was truly the result of inattention. Only in the latter case should it be labelled ‘inadvertent’.

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Inadvertence refers to a lack of attention

Editor—As a young resident, a long time ago, I attended a conference by Professor Alon P. Winnie who explained that inadvertence referred to negligence and was, consequently, a term that should not be used to describe an adverse event that occurs accidentally, especially in anaesthesia. According to Webster’s dictionary, inadvertence refers to the fact of not turning the mind to a matter, to being inattentive. To be honest, the dictionary also mentions, as the second definition of inadvertent: unintentional. However, this is not the main definition of inadvertence.

Since those days, I have often seen the word used inappropriately in a number of articles. This is not the first time I have seen it used in the title of an article. A cursory PubMed search revealed 768 similar occurrences, including five in our own journal! The use of inadvertent, especially in this case, to qualify repeated endobronchial intubation is most inappropriate as the authors were aware of the adverse event and made all efforts to correct the situation.

2 www.thefreedictionary.com

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