tometric analysis) is elevated.

Severe methemoglobinemia is rapidly reversed by intravenous administration of the reducing agent methylene blue (1-2 mg/kg in a 1 percent solution administered over 5 min). Because of the urgency of treating severe methemoglobinemia, particularly in patients who have underlying lung disease, bronchoscopists are well advised to maintain a stock of methylene blue in the bronchoscopy suite.

John Hansen-Flaschen, M.D., F.C.C.P.,
Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania,
Philadelphia

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PCIRV—A Mode of Ventilation Associated with Problems

To the Editor:

Abraham and Yoshihara (Chest 1989; 96:1356-59) draw conclusions about the impact of pressure controlled–inverse ratio ventilation (PCIRV) on hemodynamics from only nine patients. The authors state that PCIRV is not associated with "any deterioration in hemodynamic or tissue oxygen metabolism parameters," although one patient demonstrated a significant decrease in blood pressure and cardiac index. Their conclusion stands in contrast to general experience.

The data analysis is questionable. Multiple t-tests are incorrect for analyzing this type of data. No attempt was made to account for the accumulating type II error by the use of a Bonferroni adjustment. Multivariate analysis of variance, with airway pressures included as covariates, would have been the right analysis and may have provided different results.

There were no definitive, prospective selection criteria used for patient enrollment. Furthermore, the authors did not report these important variables: intrinsic positive end expiratory pressure (PEEP), auto-PEEP,2,3 and mean airway pressure. Evaluation of PCIRV is difficult without these airway pressure measurements before and after initiation of PCIRV.

The precise rules for changing to and for controlling PCIRV are not stated. This information is important, not only for optimizing patient oxygenation and ventilation, but also for interpretation of the data. PCIRV is a complicated, difficult to use, and potentially hazardous form of ventilation in critically-ill patients. Clinicians using PCIRV need to be aware of the risks associated with auto-PEEP. Auto-PEEP is no different from PEEP in its effects on many organ systems, including the cardiovascular system. Contrary to the conclusions in this article, hemodynamic changes are commonly associated with inverted ratio ventilation.4 We agree that further studies should determine any survival benefit of PCIRV and those patients who would potentially benefit from PCIRV.

Stephan H. Boehm, M.D.;
Lindell K. Weaver, M.D.;
Thomas D. East, Ph.D., and
Alan H. Morris, M.D., F.C.C.P.,
Pulmonary Divisions,
LDS Hospital and University of Utah,
Salt Lake City

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To the Editor:

Dr. Morris and colleagues state that "general experience" with pressure controlled inverse ratio ventilation (PC-IRV) has found that hemodynamic changes are commonly associated with this ventilatory modality. We are unaware of this "general experience." The paper that they cite to support their contention in fact showed that the hemodynamic changes associated with PC-IRV were similar to those found with PEEP. In the studies reported in that article, the addition of PEEP to intermittent positive pressure ventilation (IPPV) resulted in decreased cardiac output and oxygen delivery, as would be expected. Use of PC-IRV with an I:E ratio of 4:1 and maintenance of the same end expiratory volume as during the PEEP trial showed similar changes in hemodynamics as those found with PEEP. It therefore seems that the information generally available (ie, the previously published paper coupled with our own study) would indicate that few alterations in hemodynamic parameters beyond those that accompany PEEP occur with the initiation of PC-IRV.

"Auto-PEEP" was considered in our study and is referred to in the methods section of our paper as "end-expiratory pressure," which one of the reviewers felt to be a more accurate term. As noted in our methods section, end-expiratory pressure was kept at the same level as the PEEP used during volume-controlled ventilation. In this way, we were able to match the periods before and after institution of PC-IRV to prevent unsuspected auto-PEEP from producing any alteration in cardiorespiratory values. Mean airway pressure increased slightly after the initiation of PC-IRV, from 28 ± 9 cm H2O to 32 ± 5 cm H2O. This degree of increase in mean airway pressure with PC-IRV is similar to that found by other investigators.1

The analysis of our data is not changed by using a Bonferroni adjustment. In particular, we still find that PC-IRV results in a significant increase in PaO2, without any alteration in the other cardiorespiratory values. Neither we nor our statistician can see any reason a priori to use multivariate analysis of variance to analyze our data.

We agree with Dr. Morris and his colleagues that PC-IRV is potentially hazardous in the critically ill patient. Indeed, as noted in our paper, one patient had hemodynamic deterioration when PC-IRV was used. However, eight of the nine patients showed either improvement or no change in hemodynamics when PC-IRV was initiated. Our experience, as well as that of other investigators, would indicate that PC-IRV correctly used—with attention to the risks associated with auto-PEEP—may be useful in patients with severe respiratory failure since this modality can produce improvement in PaO2 without significant alteration in hemodynamic parameters.

Edward Abraham M.D., F.C.C.P.,
Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine
University of California School of Medicine, Los Angeles

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