Controversies in Cardiovascular Research

STARTING in early 1977, Circulation Research will publish a new section, “Controversies in Cardiovascular Research.” This section will appear three or four times a year in place of the Brief Reviews. The raison d'être for the Controversies is to satisfy a need that cannot be met by the Brief Reviews. The purpose of the latter is to provide a summary of the developments in a particular field of cardiovascular research. For those areas in which there is a fair degree of unanimity with respect to available data and their interpretation, as well as goals for further research, the Brief Review is an appropriate and, indeed, a satisfactory vehicle. However, if there is disagreement about data and their interpretation, the Brief Review often is not satisfactory. There are two reasons for this: First, the author is expected to be evenhanded in the presentation of divergent views; hence the Brief Review tends to minimize the differences between opposing opinions. As a result much of the flavor and even the intent of opposing arguments may be lost. Second, the review process for the Brief Reviews tends to ensure a smoothing over of divergent views because the manuscript is referred to a number of editors whose responsibility is to ensure that opposing views and arguments are presented impartially. Although the resulting presentation does offer a good view of the “state of the art,” it does not permit the reader to appreciate many of the subtle, or even the more obvious, differences in opinion that exist in a given field. This, then, provides the rationale for the Controversies.

Our intention is to invite two authors—or groups of authors—with different or opposing opinions about a particular subject to submit manuscripts in support of their viewpoints. We encourage you, our readers, to suggest subjects or areas you would like to see treated in the Controversies. We wish to emphasize that the persons invited to participate in this new form of communication will be expected to restrict their presentations to arguments that advance our understanding of a particular subject and the reasons for disagreement about it. We believe that such presentations often can do more to stimulate thought and research that will clarify interpretations and lead to definitive answers than can a more unbiased Brief Review. We expect that in this section authors will, in general, present the case for their own views (and, almost inevitably, the case against another’s). However, we also believe that, to ensure scientific accuracy and logic of presentation, manuscripts submitted as Controversies must satisfy all accepted standards of the Journal. For these reasons the Controversies will be evaluated by referee editors in the same way as other manuscripts submitted to Circulation Research.

For each subject selected for Controversies each of the two manuscripts submitted will be sent to the author or authors of the other manuscript. Each will be asked to write a brief comment on, or a rebuttal of, the paper presenting the opposing view. In the issues of Circulation Research in which the Controversies are published, the two manuscripts will be presented together, with the comments provided by each participant.

We hope that this section will provide a forum for the exploration of the differences that often occur in the results of experiments and in their interpretation. The Controversies also will permit an updating and a display of opposing or differing views as well as an opportunity for rebuttal that ordinarily are not provided by the Journal. We expect that the ensuing debates will permit both informed and casual readers to make judgments about the validity of differing positions. If, indeed, this is the case, the section will provide not only an understanding of what already has been accomplished but also, and more importantly, an understanding of what remains to be done to resolve existing problems and disagreements in a particular area.

Michael R. Rosen
Brian F. Hoffman
Is the cell membrane Na+, K+ -ATPase enzyme system the pharmacological receptor for digitalis?
A Schwartz

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