

the public health with an adequate margin of safety. The language of the Act and its legislative history clearly indicate that consideration of cost is not germane to a determination of the level of the standard." In describing his use of the scientific record, he stated

Our medical review of this standard has been underway for nearly two years. . . . I believe it is crucial that all air pollution standards be based on the best medical and scientific information available. The integrity of the entire environmental program depends upon standards that represent the best science available to us, and the best judgments we can make about that evidence. For those who tend to view these issues in black and white terms—for those who say never give an inch to anyone and those who say costs are more important—I reiterate my commitment to the scientific integrity of these standards.

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Although I disagree with much of Gage's statement, I wish to respond only to his central assertion that the EPA secured a "general endorsement" of its criteria document for smog from the scientific advisers after "they had been dissolved as a standing committee by the parent Science Advisory Board." I have three objections. A review body which has been dissolved by definition cannot give its approval of something. The EPA cannot document the statement that the committee voted its "general endorsement" of the work in hand. The chairman of the committee, James Whittenberger, told me he did not give his approval.—ELIOT MARSHALL

### Effects of Anesthesia

In Gina Bari Kolata's article regarding teratogens acting through males (Research News, 17 Nov. 1978, p. 733), she makes the statement, "The best evidence comes from a 1974 study of operating-room personnel exposed to anesthetic gases." She goes on to write that the wives of these men had significantly increased rates of spontaneous abortions, and their babies were more likely to have congenital defects than the offspring of unexposed men.

The American Society of Anesthesiologist's ad hoc committee report concerning occupational diseases in operating room personnel includes the finding, contrary to Kolata's statement, that the rate of spontaneous abortion among wives of anesthesiologists was lower than the rate found in a control group

(wives of pediatricians) (1, p. 331). The committee did report a higher rate of congenital abnormalities among children of male anesthesiologists than was found in the control group (1, p. 332). Comments expressed in two subsequent critiques (2) raise questions as to the true significance of the latter finding.

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### References

1. Ad Hoc Committee on the Effect of Trace Anesthetics on the Health of Operating Room Personnel, *Anesthesiology* 41, 321 (1974).
2. L. F. Waltz, A. B. Forsythe, J. G. Moore, *ibid.* 42, 608 (1975); L. L. Ferstandig, *Anesth. Analg. (Cleveland)* 57, 328 (1978).

The conclusions reached in Gina Bari Kolata's article on behavioral teratology (Research News, 17 Nov. 1978, p. 732) are not substantiated by the data she cites. The belief of a number of social scientists that the type and dosage of obstetrical medication is not related to the requirements of an individual patient does not appear to be substantiated in fact. It is true that the obstetrical medications used in various hospitals vary and that some physicians do commonly issue standing orders for anesthesia. However, many physicians do not leave such standing orders, and those who do may increase the dosage of anesthesia as indicated in the course of labor. Thus, the women who received the highest dosage of anesthesia may well be the woman who had the most difficult labor. The behavioral deficits noted in the article may, thus, not be related to the medication but, instead, to some other factor related to the difficult delivery.

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*Erratum:* In the article "Yearly report on carcinogens could be a potent weapon in the war on cancer" (News and Comment, 9 Feb., p. 525), the second line of the second column on page 525 should read "... testing for carcinogens." The last two lines of the first column on page 526 should read "... nearly 70,000 chemicals already used commercially." The sixth line of the second column on page 527 should read "... program in viral oncology. . . ."

*Erratum:* Articles about Fermilab by William D. Metz (News and Comment, 13 Oct. 1978, p. 195; 17 Nov. 1978, p. 725) contain references to Norman F. Ramsey as chairman of the board of trustees of Universities Research Association. The chairman of the URA board of trustees is Milton G. White of Princeton University. Ramsey is the president of the association.

*Erratum:* In "Chemical carcinogens: The scientific basis for regulation" (Research News, 29 Sept. 1978, p. 1200), a list of substances known to be human carcinogens was erroneously attributed to David P. Rall. The list was actually compiled by investigators at the International Agency for Research on Cancer [L. Tomatis *et al.*, *Cancer Res.* 38, 817 (1978)].

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