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Piggy-back. A son with more than one father

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Sir: With great interest and no little surprise, I read the letter from Sir Roy Calne published in *Transplant International* [1] that strongly criticizes the phrase "piggy-back technique, described for the first time by Tzakis in 1989", which I used in my article, published earlier in the year in the same journal [3]. Sir Calne claims paternity for the technique, which he described in an article published in the *BMJ* in 1968 [2].

I would like to say that I have the greatest respect and admiration for Sir Calne, whom I consider together with few others to be the true masters of organ transplantation, and it is for this reason that I was particularly surprised. I say "interest" because criticism received from such an authority is always stimulating and well accepted, and "surprise" because of the inopportuneness and severity of the words used. Sir Calne says that "Such ignorance . . . is extraordinary" and "a sad reflection on contemporary scholarship". He expresses little regard for the peer review policy of *Transplant International* and its reviewers who, he feels, should be "better informed".

In the same volume of the journal, there is an article by Mazzaferro et al. on renal splenic shunts after piggy-back liver transplantation [4]. Sir Calne's publication is not listed in the reference list, while that of

Tzakis et al. [6] is. Another very recent paper, by Stieber et al. published in *Transplantation* (which supposedly has better informed reviewers and a better peer review policy), says that "The 'piggy-back' technique for orthotopic liver transplantation (a variation of which was used by Sir Roy Calne in England in 1968) was formally described by Tzakis et al. in 1989" [5]. The reference list of this article does not include the article by Sir Calne either. Thus, I think that my "ignorance", which is "a sad reflection of contemporary scholarship", is shared by others. No doubt, several authors have had the same teachers.

If the term "ignorant" is considered in the sense of "a person who does not know", then I must say that Sir Calne is right; I did not read his 1968 article, either when it was published (I was in primary school at the time) or later. While I may be excused for not reading English too well when I was in primary school, this was not the case later. Yet, it is almost impossible to find the article via the normal research system (*Medline*) because terms such as "piggy-back" and "preservation of the vena cava" are not used in his article. While I recognize Sir Calne's talent in having performed such complex operations so long ago, the vastness of the literature that exists today is such that it is extremely difficult to keep abreast of new developments. Even with the best will in the world, it is simply not possible to know the entire bibliography of a subject such as liver transplantation from its beginnings up until the present. One is, therefore, obliged to rely on data banks and computers, which are undoubtedly of great use

but not sufficiently intelligent to consider articles that are certainly fundamental but not classified according to modern criteria.

I believe that criticism of the contents of the study I presented would have been much more constructive and useful than a dispute on the paternity of the technique used. From now on, it will therefore be necessary to acknowledge that the piggy-back technique has two fathers, one legitimate and one adoptive.

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