Myocardial Gene Transfer for Patients With Myocardial Ischemia

To the Editor:

The report by Losordo et al concerning myocardial gene transfer for patients with myocardial ischemia is promising. However, I believe their report merely demonstrates safety and does not provide substantial "evidence for a favorable clinical effect of direct myocardial injection of naked plasmid DNA encoding for VEGF [vascular endothelial growth factor]." The clinical outcomes are equally compatible with placebo effects that result from surgical procedures.

Excitement often accompanies new cutting-edge scientific advances. This enthusiasm seems to be especially communicated through innovative surgical procedures. Cardiovascular disease seems especially susceptible. The results reported in this phase 1 clinical study do not exceed outcomes reported from the 2 late-1950s randomized controlled trials comparing internal mammary artery ligation with sham operation. In these trials, subjective improvement was dramatic, especially in the sham procedure, and objective evidence, although more primitive by today’s standards, was substantial.

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