Hacked by the Russians

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Hacked by the Russians: That was my first reaction when I was asked to review 2 Aspirin and Tranexamic Acid for Coronary Artery Surgery trials for the *Journal*. I thought the *Journal* had been hacked or I was reading fake news.

The Aspirin and Tranexamic Acid for Coronary Artery Surgery trial (tranexamic acid vs placebo and acetylsalicylic acid vs placebo in a factorial design) is a great trial that produced 2 factual and honest articles published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*.^{1,2} No differences in mortality or myocardial infarction (MI) were observed. The same authors are now suggesting that tranexamic acid may reduce major adverse cardiovascular events (MACE) at 1 year (with a *P* value of .053) and a skimpy meta-analysis showing a reduced rate of MI? How is this possible?

Please try to explain to me how a *prothrombotic* drug (by stabilizing fibrin clots) could improve survival and decrease MI at 1 year. What is the mechanism? By making more clots? Keep in mind that a large trial³ of 27,000 patients just demonstrated that a low dose of antithrombotic medication (rivaroxaban) demonstrated a very significant reduction in MACE (death, MI, and stroke) in patients with coronary artery disease.

You will tell me to let the readers decide for themselves. We are supposed to read the whole article, but most of us only read the title and the conclusion of the abstract, and then if really interested, we will read the whole article. I know you do this as well. There is a reason why people still buy grocery magazines.

Therefore, it is crucial the title, the abstract, and the article represent the data with correct methodology, without trying to sell something or misrepresenting the scientific message. Flashy conclusions and hypotheses have no place in an article. If you have a brilliant hypothesis, just disclose it properly in the Discussion section by mentioning “a trend in improving MACE at 1 year has been observed, possibly explained by avoiding blood products at time of surgery.

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Central Message

We have to stick to our data and only present them with the highest quality of methodology. We do not write in grocery magazines.

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The mechanism remains unclear, but this hypothesis need to be resolved with further research.”

It is time that authors put their egos in the closet, avoid over-the-top conclusions, and stick to respected methodology, even if the results are not as expected.⁴ Surgeons are not stupid, but we act like it when we are willing to accept flashy conclusions too quickly, without examining the data but also accepting inaccurate and erroneous articles in our surgical journals. We surgeons, and reviewers and editors as well, need to stick to the facts and demand the highest quality. The authors, reviewers, and editors of *The New England Journal of Medicine* do it, and this *Journal* should do it too.

I would like to finish with the words of Bruce Springsteen, a great American songwriter and rocker: “Trust none of what you hear and less of what you see.”⁵

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