To the Editor: Professor Katz has reminded us that vascular fragility is a common hazard of age that can sometimes be relieved by volume expansion. Of interest in his cases is the coincidence of sodium-restricted diet and antihypertensive medication. Although details are lacking, the possibility of volume contraction is real—particularly if diuretic and angiotensin blockade are part of the therapy in patients adhering to a sodium-restricted diet. The consequences described here are modest. However, evidence exists that blockade of both the volume and vasoconstriction supports of blood pressure can be associated with increased mortality in studies of persons with established cardiovascular disease.

Patients at risk have high plasma renin activity (PRA), lower blood pressure, elevated blood urea nitrogen, and uric acid, compared to lower risk participants in the same studies. Elevated PRA is a protective response to maintain blood pressure, particularly in patients receiving both diuretic and renin-angiotensin-system blocking agents. In such patients, liberalization of sodium intake and reduction of natriuretic drugs, sufficient to moderate PRA while maintaining adequate blood pressure, may be of benefit.

DISCLOSURE

The author declared no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES