Sir William Harvey in his 17th century treatise, *Exercitatio Anatomica de Motu Cordis et Sanguinis in Animalibus*, elucidated the circulatory system in general and provided insight into the purpose of the right ventricle (RV):

“...as the lungs are so close at hand, and in continual motion, and the vessel that supplies them is of such dimensions, what is the use or meaning of this pulse of the right ventricle? And why was nature reduced to the necessity of adding another ventricle for the sole purpose of nourishing the lungs?”

Despite Harvey’s insights four centuries ago, until relatively recently the RV was thought to be unimportant in the circulation. However, over the past three decades there has been increasing appreciation of the importance of the RV under physiologic conditions and in various disease states. In 2006, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute formed a working group specifically dedicated to fostering a better understanding of RV function and failure and identifying the key areas where research efforts should be applied to advance this largely understudied field.

*The Faces of RV Failure* was compiled to provide a comprehensive state-of-the-art review focusing on the pathophysiology and management of RV failure in various disease states. We hope this issue will not only provide insights into the increasingly common scenarios in which RV failure complicates clinical management but also serve to stimulate physician-scientists to investigative pursuits further to move the field forward to enhance care for our patients.

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