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Cardiac murmurs are a frequent finding of physical examinations, but most of them are innocent. Nevertheless, the discovery of a murmur may provoke significant parental anxiety.¹ Up to 50% of children may have cardiac murmurs, but structural heart disease is present in less than 1%.² Despite this reassuring epidemiology, a parent who has just been told about a murmur thinks he or she is being told about a serious disease. It is therefore crucial to discriminate between innocent murmurs and murmurs related to heart disease, in order to reduce parental apprehension and to avoid unnecessary referrals to a pediatric cardiologist.

The art of auscultation requires considerable practice, and some reports indicate that the clinical auscultation skills of pediatric residents may be improved in many ways.³ We therefore propose the “Seven S Murmurs” to younger doctors, this being a sort of wordplay, an alliteration, designed to help them keep the semiotic aspects of a potentially innocent murmur in mind. Seven is a highly symbolic number in many fields, from literature to religion, and from astronomy to mythology. In cardiology, we have 7 types of innocent murmurs (Still’s murmur, innocent pulmonary blood flow murmur, innocent pulmonary branch murmur of the infant, supraclavicular bruit, venous hum, mammary souffle, and cardiorespiratory murmur).⁴ The 7 Ss that help us recall these innocent murmurs are the following: *Systolic* (apart from “venous hum,” a diastolic murmur is always pathological), *Small* (limited to a small area), *Soft* (the amplitude is low), *Short* (in duration, it never being olosystolic), *Single* (not accompanied by clicks or gallop), *Sweet* (never harsh),

and *Sensitive* (to posture or breathing). In the Mordecai Richler novel *Barney’s Version*,⁵ the protagonist Barney Panofsky is often obsessed with remembering the names of the Seven Dwarfs. Frustrated at being unable to remember more than 4 or 5 of them, he calls his son overseas to find out the names of the ones he is missing. Likewise, even experienced pediatricians may sometimes find it a challenge to remember all 7 signs, but now they will be able to summon a junior doctor to help.

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