

Essay by EVB

Topic: My Most memorable Anaesthetic Experience

I am a 60 year old Liberian graduated from the School of Anesthesia at the JFK Medical Center on April 14th, 1977. I have been practicing anesthesia both in and out of Liberia for the past 30 years.

My first minor anesthetic memorable experience occurred in 1980 when a 5 year old male child suddenly expired on the stretcher in the corridor few minutes after herniotomy surgery while getting ready to transport him back on the ward. That was due to my inexperience as a newly graduate nurse anesthetist. I didn't know the physical and anatomical difference between the child and adult anesthesia that the child metabolic rate is high, that the tidal volume is small, that the O₂ demand is high with rapid circulation etc.

My most memorable anesthetic experience took place in Nigeria in 1991 while I was there as a Liberian Refugee. I was employed in one Mission Hospital as an anesthetist. The hospital administrator had a tumor under his right jaw. He was scheduled for tumor removal. Pre-op assessment was done and all materials needed for intubation were gathered together. Induction was done followed by successful intubation – muscle relaxant was given and surgery began. In one and half hours the tumor was removed. Fifteen minutes to the end of surgery the patient was on spontaneous respiration. Reversal was given – Neostigmine 2mg with 1mg Atropine. Suctioning was followed by 100% O₂. I felt that the reflexes had returned, and the patient can breathe in and out on his own. So for the last time I suctioned and extubated – right away he relapsed and started fighting on the table. I tried to re-intubate but was unsuccessful. The patient expired in the process. I was so miserable that I just cannot overcome it being a refugee in a foreign land. Only the grace of God sustained me.