

1st Prize

Topic: My most Memorable Anesthetic Experience

This essay intends to narrate an incidence which I considered the driving force behind my selection of the field of anesthesia as a career.

One of the most shocking things that I have ever experienced was the death of a young female adult; a primipara at a hospital in a rural, northern part of Liberia. The death of this only daughter of an elderly, senile woman came as the result of a likely high level spinal anesthesia at T-6 administered by an experienced empirical anesthetist Aide. She was at full term gestation with physical fitness status 1 and had gone to undergo Cesarean Section with transverse lie presentation as the indication for the surgery.

Unfortunately when the spinal with 5% Xylocaine (100mg) in 7.5% Dextrose went high and Operation Room team fruitlessly struggled to resuscitate the patient but to no avail; neither the surgeon nor the (? Anesthetist) that administered the spinal anesthesia had the skill to intubate or properly administer oxygen under mask. Therefore, the respiratory depression eventually progressed to cardiac arrest.

After this unexpected disaster, the biggest challenge was to face the mother, and other relatives of this patient, to announce the death. How then can the Operation Room team explain or justify the cause of death of this lady who literally walked to the theater holding her urine bag in her hand?

It is interesting to note that during this period, the hospital had no trained anesthetist. The only one anesthetist that was in that hospital fled the country in 1980, following a coup d'état which brought to power a Master sergeant of the Arm Forces of Liberia (AFL).

This ugly experience was the motivation which led me into choosing anesthesia as career to fill in a gap at the hospital. I succeeded in getting a scholarship, studied anesthesia for two years, returned and served the hospital for six years. Presently the hospital has a team of three anesthetists and is serving as local training base for Nurse-Anesthetists.

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