

Assessment of Patient's Knowledge Regarding Speciality of Anesthesia and Anesthesiologists: A Questionnaire Based Study

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Abstract

Background: Anesthetist most of the time feel that they have not been given the credit they deserve. They have been treated as behind the screen specialist. Their role has never been appreciated by the patient. Most of the time patient's knowledge about anesthesia and anesthetist is limited. **Aim:** To assess patient awareness regarding anesthesia and anesthetist **Method:** After approval from the institutional ethical committee, 200 participants scheduled for various surgical procedures were randomly selected. After obtaining informed written consent, they were administered a set of questionnaire face to face orally by an investigator and their responses were recorded separately. The data collected were subjected to simple statistical analysis. **Result:** Out of 200 patients, only 40% knew that anesthetist alleviate the pain of surgical procedure by putting the patient to sleep. Only 30% of participants said that anesthetist is a specialist doctor. Hardly very few patients knew about the role of anesthetist outside the operation theatre. **Conclusion:** Awareness of patients about anesthesia and anesthetist is very much limited. Lack of recognition and appreciation of the role of anesthetist by the patients contributes to the frustration of anesthetist. Hence, every opportunity to spread awareness about anesthesia and anesthetist among patients must be utilized for the benefit of both patient and the anesthetist.

Keywords: Patient's Knowledge; Anesthesia; Anesthetist.

Introduction

Since the time anesthesia has been demonstrated to the world, there has been continuous development in the field of anesthesia like the introduction of newer anesthetic agents, techniques, advanced monitoring system, etc. Consequently, the role of anesthetist has extended beyond the traditional operating room into critical care, trauma centers, pain clinics, and conduct of painless deliveries. Despite the fact that advances in the field of anesthesia are on par with that of surgical field, the recognition of anesthetist is not on par with that of a surgeon. Most of the time's anesthesia specialty has been treated as a behind the scene specialty which itself leads to decreased awareness about

anesthesiaspecialty among patients. In general, there is feeling that the specialty of anesthesia carries low profile when compared to other clinical specialties. In the last 2-3 decades, there is the tremendous increase in the healthcare awareness all over the world but similar kind of awareness about anesthesia and anesthetist is lacking among patients. This can be found from the numerous relevant studies conducted across the world [1,2,3]. These studies reflect that there is inadequate public knowledge regarding the specialty and the scope of the functions of anesthetists as well as the pivotal role anesthetists play in the health care delivery system. Despite so many advancements and extension of the field of work beyond operation theatre as well as the critical nature of care they provide, anesthetists are hardly recognized and

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their role is hardly appreciated by the beneficiaries. Lack of recognition and decreased appreciation of the role of the anesthetist by the patients contribute to the frustration of the anesthetic practitioner. Better recognition of anesthesia professionals would encourage future recruits to take up the speciality [3]. Hence, with this background information, the present study is planned to assess patient's knowledge about the anesthesia and anesthetists by using the set of questionnaires.

Methods

This current study is a cross-sectional study conducted in our institute. After obtaining ethical clearance, 200 patients scheduled for various surgical procedures who attended pre-anesthetic clinic were randomly selected. Patient's below 18 years and above 70 years of age were excluded from the study as well as those with psychiatric illness, severe debilitating illness, unable to understand and

not willing to participate and those posted for emergency surgeries were also excluded. After obtaining informed consent from an individual participant, a set of questionnaires were administered to patients face to face orally by an interviewer and their responses were recorded. Meanings of various technical words were explained to the patients. Questions in the questionnaire were carefully prepared to keep in mind the knowledge and understanding of the population in the region. There were 24 questions in the questionnaire designed to capture the baseline demographic profile like age, sex, literacy status, socioeconomic status as well as the patient's knowledge and perception regarding anesthesia and anesthesiologist. All the data were collected, tabulated and analyzed.

Result

A total of 200 patients had been randomly chosen for the study. After explaining them in detail about

Table 1: the questionnaire

1.	Patient age_____
2.	Gender _____
3.	Educational status_____
4.	Occupation_____
5.	Have you undergone any surgery before?_____
6.	Who will assess you regarding your fitness to undergo surgery? _____
7.	Why is fasting needed before surgery according to you? _____
8.	Who will mitigate your pain during surgery?_____
9.	Is anaesthesia needed if surgery should be required?_____
10.	How is anaesthesia applied?_____
11.	Is anaesthesia applied to all patient in the same way? _____
12.	Have you heard about anaesthetist?_____
13.	Is anaesthetist, a specialist doctor or one who works under supervision of surgeon? _____
14.	Who will be taking care of your well being once you are given anaesthesia? _____
15.	Do you think that anaesthetists are as important as surgeons for you to undergo surgery? _____
16.	What do you think providing anaesthesia a easier job or involves risk?_____
17.	Do you know that anaesthetist are involved in your postoperative care? _____
18.	Do you know that anaesthetist are involved in the care of critically ill patients? _____
19.	Do you know that anaesthetist are involved in the care of accident and emergency patients? _____
20.	Do you know that anaesthetist are involved in the conduct of painless deliveries? _____
21.	Do you know that anaesthetist plays important role in the resuscitation of cardiac arrest patient? _____
22.	Do you know that if any patient in the hospital suddenly becomes serious, anaesthetist are immediately called? _____
23.	Do you know that anaesthetist runs pain clinic?_____
24.	Are you interested to know more about anaesthesia and anaesthetist? _____

Table 2:

Sl. No.	Patient Variables	Number	Percentage
1	AGE		
	18-30 years	70	35%
	30-50 years	106	53%
2	50-70 years	24	12%
	GENDER		
	Male	122	61%
	female	78	39%

the purpose of the study, they were told about the meaning of difficult terminologies used for the interview. The responses to the interview questionnaire were obtained from each individual and recorded and subsequently analyzed. Following facts were found from the study. Among the participants, 53% were between 30 to 50 years of age, 35% were from 18 to 30 years of age and remaining 12% were from 50 to 70 years of age group. Male patients were more (61%) as compared to females (39%) patients (Table 2).

In our study, 37% of respondents had undergone previous surgery. On questioning about who will give you fitness to undergo surgery, 11% of participants said anesthetist, 66% said operating surgeon and remaining 24% said they don't know. As far as the question on purpose of fasting before surgery is concerned, 66% replied they don't know, 25% patients said to prevent complications during surgery and 10% respondents said to prevent vomiting. When asked about who will alleviate pain during surgery, 60% said operating surgeon and only 40% acknowledged that it is the anaesthetist. On questioning about how is anaesthesia applied, out of 200 patients, 60 (30%) patients said anaesthesia is provided by holding mask over face whereas 22(11%) patients knew that anaesthesia can be provided either by applying mask to face, by injecting into the veins or by giving injection at the back. When asked have you heard about anesthetist before, 41% respondents said yes. 30% of patients told that anesthetist is a specialist doctor whereas 70 patients (35%) had an impression that anesthetists work under the supervision of the surgeon. On enquiring about who will be looking after you once you are put to sleep, 73% believed that it is the surgeon and 27% believed that it is the anaesthetist. As far as the risk of providing anesthesia is concerned, 36% believed that it is a simpler job and remaining 64% said they don't know. When enquired about the role of anesthetist outside operating room like ICU, trauma care, resuscitation etc. only 5 patients replied that anesthetist also works in ICU. Apart from that, no patient had any idea about the role of anesthetist outside OT.

Discussion

Anesthesia is an ever-evolving branch. When started, it was limited to providing anesthesia to surgical patients. Subsequent developments in the field of anesthesia led to the extension of the field of work of anaesthesiologist outside the conventional operation theatre into the critical care, accident and emergency department, pain clinics, conduct of painless deliveries and resuscitation of the patient with cardiorespiratory collapse etc. The practice of anesthesia is considered as the high-risk job. Majority of anesthesia related morbidity and mortality are attributed to the human errors. So, the anesthetist has to very meticulously execute his job. This leads to considerable stress and ultimately leads to deprivation of healthy working atmosphere. Added to this there is lack of recognition and low appraisal among the general population. These factors ultimately result in the frustration of anesthetist. After witnessing these things, future recruits will show less interest to join anesthesia specialty.

When we look at the results of our study we find that only 40% of study population knows that anesthesia is provided by the anesthesiologist. The study conducted in Ghana by Djagbletey R. et al, reported that 62% of the respondent were aware of anesthetist. In a similar study conducted in Saudi Arabia by Baaj J, Takrouri MSM, Hussein BM and Al Ayyaf H, 55% of respondents said that anesthesia is provided by an anaesthetist. In our country, a result of a similar study by Jathar D, Shinde VS, Patel RD and Naik LD revealed that 44% of patients were aware that anesthesia is provided by the anaesthetist, which is very close to that found in our study. When we asked about the role of anaesthesiologist outside OT, only 5 patients knew that anesthetist also work in ICU. Nobody is aware of the role of anesthetist in pain management, trauma care, resuscitation etc. Only 30% of respondents of our study were aware that anesthetist is a specialist doctor. Most of the patients think that anesthetists work under the supervision of operating surgeon.

Last 15–20 years have witnessed the sudden spurt in the healthcare awareness among public all over the world. This is partly due to the explosive growth of the media like television and internet in the recent past [10].

This suddenly increased healthcare awareness has not affected the field of anesthesia in a significant way. Majority population even know also does not know who is anesthetist, whether he is specialist, what role he plays outside operating room etc. They have very limited knowledge about the specialty. Recognition of the anesthesia profession as an independent specialty would help anesthesia practitioner to develop his own individual identity and also, in turn, encourages future recruits to take up the specialty. On the other hand, lack of recognition and decreased appreciation of the role of the anesthesiologist by the patient further contributes to the frustration of the anesthetic practitioner [12].

Public awareness about anesthesia and anaesthesiologist can be brought up in many ways. At an individual level, anesthetist during his preoperative visit can introduce himself to the patient and brief him about the field of anesthesia. Similarly, at a national and international level, public awareness about anesthesia and anaesthesiologist can be improved by showing short video films and documentaries on television, printing special articles in newspapers, distribution of booklets etc. Also, an introduction of small chapters at school level concerning the role of anaesthesiologist may be helpful.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the anaesthesiologist who takes a lot of stress and struggles to make patient undergo surgery safely without feeling pain, is rarely recognized and appreciated by the patients.

Lack of recognition and appreciation can result in frustration among anaesthesiologists. On the other hand, fear of surgical pain prevents many patients from undergoing surgery and it instills a kind of anxiety in surgical patients. So, knowledge of the availability of different types of anesthesia techniques to take care of perioperative and postoperative pain can help patient to overcome fear and anxiety associated with surgery. In this way, both patients, as well as anesthesiologists, will get benefitted by the spread of awareness regarding anesthesia and anesthetists. Hence, every opportunity to spread awareness regarding anesthetists as well as anesthesia among the general population, must be utilized. Print and social media can be of great help in this regard.

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