Original research article:

Study of awareness about anaesthesia and anaesthesiologists in general population

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Abstract:

Introduction: We felt that knowledge about anaesthesia is still lacking in lay people, so we conducted present study in our multi-speciality hospital to assess the knowledge and awareness about anaesthesia and anaesthesiologists in general population and to find out the relationship between literacy level and awareness.

Methodology: We conducted a cross sectional observational study on 304 adult patients coming for pre anaesthesia check up for an elective surgery. A validated multiple choice questionnaires of ten questions was administered to these patients, each correct answer was awarded one mark, while no marks were awarded to wrong answers and unattempted MCQs. The questionnaires were filled up and results were tabulated.

Results: In our present study, we found 74% People felt that anaesthesia is necessary for surgery. 55% people knew that anaesthesia is given by anaesthesiologist. 49% People knew that anaesthesiologists not only administer anaesthesia but also take care of vitals intraoperatively. Only 18% that is 55 people knew the role of anaesthesiologist in ICU, Painless labour, pain management.

Conclusion: As literacy rate increases, the awareness about anaesthesia will also increase. So to change the perception of people, efforts should be taken at individual level as well as anaesthesia society at city, state and national level too. Print and electronic media plays an important role in educating people. Pre and post operative consultation with patient by anaesthesiologists with proper information about anaesthesia and answering their queries will also change the picture.

Introduction:

Anaesthesiology today is the most important branch of modern medical practice with its wide spectrum ranging from perioperative patient care to pain management, critical care and palliative care etc. Today the most decisive role is playing by these experts. The general population hardly known for the advancements, their responsiveness. The problems of image and status of the anaesthesiologists in the eyes of the medical and lay communities are not new. With the changing health care environment and advancement in anaesthesiology, the patients and general public needs to be educated. The need of the time is to highlight anaesthesiology as a separate medical discipline in both audiovisual as well as print media. But before we suggest anything we actually need to know the level of awareness about anaesthesiology and the anaesthesiologist among the general population.
Anaesthesia is highly challenging, rapidly advancing and an important branch of medicine. It is only because of advances in anaesthesia and trained, competent anaesthesiologists that the most complicated and risky surgeries are undertaken successfully. Medical fraternity knows this fact but what about society? Are they really aware of this highly complex branch? We felt that knowledge about anaesthesia is still lacking in lay people, so we conducted a cross sectional study in our multi-speciality hospital to assess the knowledge and awareness about anaesthesia and anaesthesiologists in general population and to find out the relationship between literacy level and awareness. 3,4

Methodology:
We conducted a cross sectional observational study on 304 adult patients coming for pre anaesthesia check up for an elective surgery. A validated multiple choice questionnaires of ten questions was administered to these patients, each correct answer was awarded one mark, while no marks were awarded to wrong answers and unattempted MCQs. The questionnaires were filled up and results were tabulated. Depending upon the marks obtained, the patients were segregated as follows:

- 0 – 3 Unaware
- 4 – 7 Partially aware
- 8- 10 Totally aware

Inclusion criteria : 18 to 80 years of age
Exclusion criteria : Pediatric and extreme geriatric patients.

Results:
In our present study, 116 patients were unaware while only 49 patients were found fully aware regarding job of anesthetists.

Group 1 ) Awareness status of patients of anesthetists
Unaware:116
Partially aware:139
Completely aware:49
Total 304

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Graph 1) Showing unawareness & partially awareness status of patients

Group 2) Educational background of patients

Illiterate: 33
Secondary education: 140
Higher secondary: 47
Graduate: 58
Post graduate: 26

Graph 2) Educational background of patients
Group 3) Unawareness & literacy level

I : 16
S : 62
HS : 20
G : 14
PG : 4

Graph 3) Unawareness & literacy level

Graph 4) Awareness about anesthesia
Graph 5 ) Awareness about anesthesiologists

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Discussion:
The problem of image and status of the Anaesthesiologist in general population are not new. Regarding issues relating to the status and image of the speciality many, if not all, practicing anaesthesiologist have struggled at some point. Development of anaesthesiology as a speciality has enabled the advancements in surgical management and critical care. Better knowledge about various anaesthesia techniques and their possible complications in various conditions of patients may reduce the number of medico legal litigations. A good communication with the physician as judged by the patient is associated with lower incidence of malpractice litigation. Well informed patients can select their anaesthesiologists which can help in improving the peri-operative care which in turn will reduce the morbidity.

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Table 1) Comparison of our study with other studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>No 304</th>
<th>No 150</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Necessity of anaesthesia for surgery</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>92.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anaesthesia was given by an anesthesiologist</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>42.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of anesthesiologist in operation theatre</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>27.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness about anesthesiologist's role in ICU, painless labour and relief of chronic pain</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>24.67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As literacy rate increases, the awareness about anaesthesia will also increase. So to change the perception of people, efforts should be taken at individual level as well as anaesthesia society at city, state and national level too. Print and electronic media plays an important role in educating people. Pre and post operative consultation with patient by anaesthesiologists with proper information about anaesthesia and answering their queries will also change the picture.

It is important to know about the source of information given by the patient. It helps us to know the cause of patient’s beliefs, information, misinformation and ignorance regarding anaesthesia and anesthesiologists. When asked about the source of their information, most of the patients replied that they knew it before hand. It could be because of patients own experience or other factors, which the patient couldn’t recall. Friends, media and their doctor contributed to the knowledge of remaining patients. But the most important finding was that the contribution of an anesthesiologist in providing information was the least.

Conclusion:
As literacy rate increases, the awareness about anaesthesia will also increase. So to change the perception of people, efforts should be taken at individual level as well as anaesthesia society at city, state and national level too. Print and electronic media plays an important role in educating people. Pre and post operative consultation with patient by anaesthesiologists with proper information about anaesthesia and answering their queries will also change the picture.

References: