

Other journals in brief

A selection of abstracts of clinically relevant papers from other journals.

The abstracts on this page have been chosen and edited by John R. Radford.

MINIMISING ANXIETY

The power of words: sources of anxiety in patients undergoing local anaesthetic plastic surgery

Caddick J, Jawad S *et al.* *Ann R Coll Surg Engl* 2012; **94**: 94–98

Operating around the face and giving locals cause patients most distress.

Immediately following plastic surgery using local analgesia, 70 patients completed questionnaires about their experiences. Surgery around the face and giving locals caused patients most concern. Yet this is what a dentist does day in and day out. Apart from these observations, this paper focuses on the language used by surgical teams. Not surprisingly, the words 'knife', 'scalpel', 'bone nibblers' and 'artery forceps' were considered most alarming. The term 'blade' instead of 'knife', and 'clip' instead of 'artery forceps' provoked less anxiety. Nevertheless, patients generally were not distressed about 'awake surgery'. Some dental practice management gurus suggest small talk should be patient-centred, yet it would appear background noise and casual conversations 'may provide a welcome diversion from technical discussions between staff members.' There was no statistical analysis.

DOI: 10.1038/sj.bdj.2012.491

PRIMUM NON NOCERE

The effect of alcohol on surgical skills

Kirby G, Kapoor K *et al.* *Ann R Coll Surg Engl* 2012; **94**: 90–93

Zero tolerance, or does this paper offer 'a guide to safer use of alcohol among surgeons during their time on call'?

The authors recount a story, no doubt apocryphal, of a surgeon needing 'to take a taxi to the hospital on several occasions to complete his on-call duties because he was over [the] legal driving limit.' In this study, four ENT surgeons performed microlaryngoscopy on a manikin after consuming increasing amounts of alcohol. There was an association between deteriorating surgical performance and increasing volumes of wine consumed, although one glass of wine had no deleterious effect. After three glasses of wine, communication was impaired and 'participants began to use inappropriate language' with scrub nurses. Parallels are made between the exacting roles required from surgeons and pilots. Guidelines 'advise pilots to abstain from alcohol for at least 24 hours before flying.'

DOI: 10.1038/sj.bdj.2012.492

DISCLOSURE – QUANTITATIVE TO QUALITATIVE

The numeric threshold for the disclosure of risk: outdated and inapplicable to surgical consent

Wheeler R. *Ann R Coll Surg Engl* 2012; **94**: 81–82

'...only the patient can judge what risk is material to him or her, irrespective of its frequency of occurrence', yet a dentist should demonstrate perspicacity.

Informing a patient that they could suffer permanent sensory dysfunction after the extraction of a wisdom tooth may be why that patient declines this therapeutic procedure. Yet only approximately 10% of patients experience permanent sensory dysfunction. Numerous jurisdictions have maintained that a risk as high as 10% should be the bar for disclosure. This crude numerical threshold has been overhauled. For example in Australian case law, a reasonable standard of care would not be discharged if a 14,000:1 risk of sympathetic ophthalmia (leading to possible blindness) following surgery, had not been disclosed. Lord Woolf has asserted that the correct standard for disclosure is '...a significant risk which would affect the judgement of the reasonable patient.'

DOI: 10.1038/sj.bdj.2012.493

ANXIETY – AMBIENT MUSIC

Is there a role for music in reducing anxiety in plastic surgery minor operations?

Sadideen H, Parikh A *et al.* *Ann R Coll Surg Engl* 2012; **94**: 152–154

In this study carried out in a hospital, the playing of music did not require a licence.

And of note, the European Court of Justice has recently determined that the playing of music in dental rooms should also be exempt (*Società Consortile Fonografici (SCF) v Marco Del Corso*). Yet this has to be balanced with the BDA Advice Sheet (October 2011) *Music in the Practice*, that states that such does require a licence. This is a diversion from the main finding of the study that found the playing of music was associated with both lower subjective and objective measurements for anxiety in 96 patients receiving plastic surgery. Ambient music has been described by Brian Eno as 'actively listened to with attention or as easily ignored.' This study did not report as to whether or not this music was 'easily ignored'.

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