

The official magazine of the Association of Anaesthetists

Readership

Anaesthesia News is mailed each month to over 10,000 Association members, including:

- Consultant anaesthetists
- Specialty (SAS) doctors
- Anaesthetic trainees
- Those working for the NHS or private practice (or both) in the UK, Ireland and overseas*

*94% UK and Ireland, and 6% overseas

Distribution

Consultants/SAS	56.35%
Trainees	29.00%
Overseas	3.47%
Other	11.18%

Anaesthesia News

September 2018

ISSN 0959-2962 No. 374

Innovation and technology
in the global context

Emergency paediatric
surgery and anaesthesia

Core Topics Dublin

Innovation and technology
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Emergency paediatric
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 Association
of Anaesthetists

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Further readership

Anaesthesia News is available on our website (available to members), and is also distributed at our annual flagship scientific conferences: Winter Scientific Meeting, Trainee Conference and Annual Congress.

Editorial profile

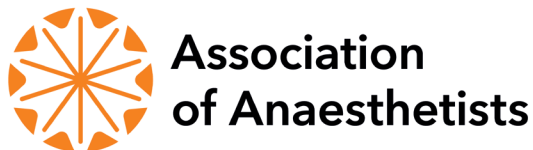
Articles and news items are written by the specialty for the specialty. It is not an academic journal, instead concentrating on professional life with articles on wellbeing, safety matters, our international and environmental work, and news items. There is a healthy mix of serious and some more light-hearted pieces, but always with the aim to inform and stimulate. As a members' magazine it is widely read, light and portable, and left in hospital coffee rooms and operating theatres for others to read.

Special issues

Many issues are themed, for example on trainees, environment, safety, portfolio careers, innovation, wellbeing, specialty doctors, or international work.

About the Association of Anaesthetists

The Association represents the life-changing, life-saving profession of anaesthesia - by supporting, informing and inspiring a worldwide community of over 10,000 members.



Challenges facing children with autistic spectrum disorder presenting for anaesthesia

A 5 year old boy presents for dental extraction at the day surgery unit. He has been diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder and attends mainstream school with 1:1 support. He has become increasingly anxious about visiting his dentist and has now had 2 courses of antibiotics for dental abscess. This young man has a potentially daunting afternoon ahead of him at hospital. As a team of healthcare professionals there are many ways that we can improve this child's experience of the unfamiliar environment of a hospital.

General considerations

Autistic spectrum disorder covers a huge range of cognitive, communication and social presentations and may be associated with a wide range of disabilities and other conditions, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety and challenges with sensory processing. These children may have a varying range of needs in terms of support from family and educational resources. For example, one child may integrate well into mainstream school with minimal assistance, another may be non-verbal and attend special school, or be home schooled, according to their individual needs and behaviour.

Pre-operative assessment

His mother is accompanying him to the pre-operative visit at the day surgery unit. His community dentist has identified him as someone who would benefit from a pre-operative visit with the play specialist. We are fortunate to have staff who regularly work with children with autism and are sensitive to the unique needs a child with autism may have, regarding social interaction, emotion and providing information.

The play specialist will meet the child and carer in a calm and quiet environment, explain in straightforward terms who they are, and the purpose of the visit. They assess from the child and carer any anxieties or concerns from the beginning. This allows the play specialist to tailor the visit accordingly, providing advice if appropriate in both written and visual terms, depending on the age and needs of the child. The environment is then familiar to both the patient and the carer coming on the day of surgery. The play specialist takes time to find out his likes and dislikes, as well as things that make him more anxious or challenge his behaviour. Carers are an invaluable source of knowledge about their own child's needs.

Upon arrival, he is shown the areas of the department that he will visit including the ward, playroom and toilet. The play specialist gives him a booklet that she has designed with interactive photographs of clinical areas, members of staff, anaesthetic equipment used, and useful information such as bringing a favourite toy or teddy, and some of the games he can play on her tablet device while going to theatre. The family leave the booklet home and can refer to it before the day of surgery. The child can take the booklet to school if desired for his Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) teacher to also discuss and reinforce.

Day of surgery

On the day of surgery, the same play specialist, having liaised with the dental team, will be present to aid continuity of care. Clear simple instructions reinforcing the steps discussed at the visit can help reduce anxiety. The child's preferred anxiety aid can be used with the anaesthetist. Maintaining a calm and quiet environment can often be a challenge on a specific ward but placing the child first on the list preferentially in the morning to reduce the awake duration time and taking advantage of a corner space in the ward may reduce noise and sensory stimulus for the child if required.

Premedication may be given, for example midazolam 0.5mg/kg (up to 40µg), mixed with paracetamol syrup or juice, and Atarax[®] applied to the sternum of both hands, to the child will tolerate the application.

Flexibility is key to managing children while maintaining safety. One example might be 'Fast 1' - an intravenous induction of anaesthesia, Plan B - an inhalational induction, and Plan C, which may include the child coming on another day, if anaesthesia is not possible the first time. Minimising the number



of members of staff in the anaesthetic room, as well as reducing unnecessary noise or stimulus can help. The play specialist's ongoing assistance can be vital in detaching and engaging the child whilst anaesthesia is induced. They can also support the carer after induction and accompany them back to the ward or waiting area, while the child has his operation.

Postoperative care

As with the pre-operative phase of care, children with autism may have specific difficulties understanding and processing the emergence and recovery of anaesthesia. It is important to communicate in advance with members of staff in paediatric recovery, to allow them to prepare the recovery room as much as possible. This may include minimising noise, reducing bright lights and ensuring the prompt arrival of a carer to minimise any distress or discomfort. Some children with autism may also find it difficult to communicate pain or nausea after surgery and again the carer's presence may be invaluable in minimising this.

In other respects the postoperative care is similar to that of any other child: register and adequate analgesia and antiemetic; recovering the child with the carer as soon as is safe, and ensuring the child receives food and drink once they are able to tolerate them. The continued presence of the same nursing staff and play specialist on the ward will also help the smooth postoperative recovery and discharge from hospital.

Summary

Children with autistic spectrum disorder present with a wide variety of needs and concerns, when attending for surgery. A pro-active and multidisciplinary approach to their care will minimize these worries and allow the child to have as positive experience as possible with their family.

Antonia Mayall
Consultant Anaesthetist, CHW

Anaesthesia 1100 | October 2018 | Issue 375 | 11

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The Amazonian arrow poison that revolutionised anaesthesia

In November 2018, the Association of Anaesthetists Heritage Centre will open a new temporary exhibition on neuromuscular blocking agents (NMBs). It will showcase authentic curare weapons alongside anaesthetic equipment to tell the history of NMBs in the practice of anaesthesia.



Curare is a deadly poison found in the Amazonian Basin of South America. It was the first NMB to be introduced into western medicine. It revolutionised the practice of anaesthesia and allowed operations which were previously considered too dangerous to be performed for the first time.

South American tribes shoot curare coated darts or arrows from blow pipes and blow to kill or stun animals for food and clothing. The process of mixing the curare poisons and creating weapons is a highly skilled process. Different strengths of poison are needed for different sized prey, and mixing these accurately can only be determined by taste; curare is not toxic through ingestion alone.

Arrow poison has been known to Europeans since Sir Walter Raleigh's expedition to Guyana in 1595. It was first brought back to England in the 1760s by Edward Bouverie (1741-1821) who had encountered the poison during his time in Guyana, writing 'An Essay on the Natural History of Guyana or South-America' under Charles Watson (1782-1860) through curare samples, or 'veronal' as he called it, back to England in the early nineteenth century and conducted experiments on animals. Albigenside Benjamin Collins Brodie (1783-1862), Watson's administrative partner at a time with visiting her lungs with influenza until the poison were off. After Watson's experiments, more scientific work was conducted by physicians of the 19th century; it was Claude Bernard's (1813-78) experiments on

In 1844 which showed conclusively that curare was acting as a NMB. He noted that 'it is an anaesthetic agent only in appearance. The animal falls, but cannot die.'

It wasn't until the 20th century that the successful use of curare as a NMB in surgery was documented. The first recognised successful use was in North America by Herold Griffith and Emil Johnson, who used Troscinone, a preparation of curare, during an experimental operation in 1942. Brodie, Carl E. Broadbent, Isaacson, unavailability and instead popularised the use of di-tubocurarine chloride which had more consistent potency. Di-tubocurarine would become the NMB of choice until curare-like synthetic agents replaced natural curare.

In combination with the new exhibition, the Association of Anaesthetists Heritage Centre will also be hosting a special 'Lecture' event on Friday 26 October, about historical medicine. The event will host Ben Lockyer, one will discuss the anti-muscular and anaesthetic drugs, curare, and one will talk into the fascinating topic of curare. A drink and buffet reception will be included afterwards. Tickets cost £20 per person (available online at <http://bit.ly/2W4h47V>) and doors open at 5.45pm.

Sophie Johnson
Heritage Officer, Association of Anaesthetists

Anaesthesia 1100 | October 2018 | Issue 375 | 17

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