Core Topics in Airway Management

Second Edition
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Edited by

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In the preface to the first edition we wrote that there was "an uneasy combination of art and science in airway management", and six years later opinions continue to diverge on how best to manage various problems. However, there has been considerable progress in both equipment and policy and we hope that readers will find this update helpful. There are some new chapters and most of the original material has been extensively revised.

One important issue is the growth of interest in the concept of "human factors" in the causation of problems. Medicine is following aviation's lead in recognising that human errors and omissions during stressful (or tedious) procedures can be as important as faulty technology, and whilst this edition was in preparation there has been a national (UK) audit of airway management (NAP 4), which looks likely to show that incidents are not as rare as we would wish.

Airway management remains literally a life or death issue. In the developed world there has been a welcome reduction in morbidity in some conditions, such as childhood epiglottitis, but the increasing age and associated co-morbidity of the population adds layers of difficulty. Obesity is a modern day scourge in many affluent societies, affecting even the youngest patients, and has important consequences for airway management. In contrast, the new chapter by Barrett and Hodgson on solutions to problems when resources are scarce makes sobering reading.

Both of us are approaching the end of our careers in anaesthesia and we would like to record our appreciation of the outstanding contributions of two individuals – Andranik “Andy” Ovassapian and Archie Brain. Andy Ovassapian (1936–2010) died during the European Society of Anaesthesiology Meeting in Helsinki. Andy was Iranian by birth but will always be associated with Chicago, where he worked in various positions for thirty six years. He was a pioneer of flexible fibreoptic intubation and his textbook on the subject remains the definitive publication. Andy founded the Society for Airway Management in 1995, and established the first and best-known Airway Study and Training Center in 1998. He was devoted to education, selfless with his time and a great friend.

Archie Brain was born in 1942 in Japan. Most would agree that Archie's invention of the laryngeal mask airway has been the greatest contribution to airway management since the tracheal tube (see Chapter 9). He was awarded the Magill Gold Medal in 1995.

Ian Calder
Adrian Pearce
2010

Andranik Ovassapian 1936–2010