



Awareness About Anaesthesia Among the Patients Coming From Tribal Area in Vidarbha Region of Maharashtra State

KEYWORDS

Awareness, Tribal, Anaesthesia

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ABSTRACT

Present study was conducted among patients' coming from tribal area in Vidarbha region to Shri V.N. Govt. Medical College, Yavatmal which is a main referral Medical center. Aim of the study was to find out the patients knowledge about anaesthesia as well as the role of anaesthesiologist during the peri-operative period. Patients' were interviewed by predesigned and pretested questionnaire during pre-anaesthetic evaluation.

Out of 450 patients interviewed, majority (78%) patients' were ignorant about anaesthesia and role of anaesthesiologist. Total 288 (64%) patients' were unaware of importance of written consent and preoperative anaesthetic evaluation. We conclude that the interior and remote tribal places in Vidarbha are still far away from the knowledge about the recent development in the Medical Sciences. Hence there is a strong need to educate the people about the role of anaesthesiologist in and outside the operation theatre.

Introduction: The development of anaesthesia as a specialty is known since its introduction in 1846 but history of anaesthesia may be as old as 3000 B.C., when surgeon and patients imbibed alcohol before the operation (Healy TJ, Cohen P J). During last six decades role of anaesthesiologist really broadened inside as well as outside the operation theatre.

Primary job of anaesthesiologist is to provide anaesthesia during operation to make the procedure comfortable. In addition supervision of intensive care unit, pain clinics to provide analgesia for pain relief during child birth, trauma. Recently they have involved in in-vitro fertilization, laboratories, lithotripsy suites, electroshock therapy and cardioversion in electrophysiology laboratories. It is indeed unfortunate that people are not aware of importance and need of specialty "Anaesthesia".

It is expected with newer educational strategies, improved health care delivery system and fast spreading information technology, that people even from small remote and peripheral places are very well aware of new medical terminologies. In reality the scenario is altogether different as the anaesthesiologist very often comes across the most ignorant patients. The present study was conducted with the aim to find out the patient's knowledge about anaesthesia as well as role of anaesthesiologist during peri-operative period among the tribal population of Yavatmal district of Vidarbha region. We also have done assessment of patient's knowledge regarding pre-anaesthetic evaluation and written consent. Keeping in mind the literacy rate, health problems, low socioeconomic condition and myths among tribal population.

Material and methods: Present cross sectional study was conducted among patients coming from tribal area to Shri V.N. Govt. Medical College, Yavatmal of Vidarbha region. Patients referred from various Out Patient Departments to Operation Theater for pre-anaesthetic evaluation (PAE) were interviewed by predesigned and pretested questionnaire. Questions were asked in patients' own language. In few

patients' mediator's help was taken for getting the answer.

Patients' belonging to age group of 20 to 50 years were included in this study. Very sick patients, patients having medical emergency were excluded from the study. Statistical analysis was done by calculating percentages.

Results: A total of 450 patients coming from tribal area were included in the study. Male patients were 189 and females were 261. Majority patients (67%) were illiterate. The various answers given by patients' as obtained from the questionnaire were presented below.

1. Do you know what is Anaesthesia?

Only 99(22%) tribal patients' were aware about term anaesthesia and remaining 351(78%) patients were unaware about this. Most of the patients' named anaesthesia as "Sungani" in local language.

2. Who is Anaesthetist ?

Majority of patients' (64%) knew that anaesthetist is a doctor. This might be because of surgeon had told them before referring the patients for pre anaesthetic evaluation. Other believed that anaesthetist means nursing staff 30 (6.7%) and technicians 35 (7.8%).

3. Are you aware about role of anaesthetist during operation?

Majority (70%) patients were unaware about role of anaesthesiologist and only 99(22%) patients told role of anaesthesiologist as he keeps the patient asleep. Total 36(8%) believed that anaesthetist is an assistant to the surgeon.

4. In your opinion how much is the importance of Anaesthetist during operation?

Majority (78%) of patients had no idea about the importance of anaesthetist during operation. Total 15 (3.3%) patients responded that anaesthetist role is slightly important during operation, 21 (4.7%) opined it as "not at all important" and 63(14%) thought it as equally important as the surgeon.

5. Are you aware of various types of anaesthesia?

Only 86 (19.1%) respondent were aware about various types of anaesthesia and 364 (80.9%) respondent were not aware about types of anaesthesia.

6. Are you aware of advantages of anaesthesia?

Only 77(17.11%) patients' were aware about advantages of anaesthesia and 373(82.88%) subjects were unaware about advantages of anaesthesia

7. Are you aware of complications of anaesthesia?

Total 96 (21.33%) patients' were aware about complications and 354 (78.7%) patients' were unaware about anaesthesia complications.

8. If patient has some idea or experience of anaesthesia what is the source of information?

Out of 99 patients' 19 (19.2%) subjects gained information regarding anaesthesia from relatives, 12(12.1%) patients' learned from friends and 63 (63.6%) patients' had their own experiences of anaesthesia. Only 5(5.1%) learned from books, radio, newspapers, TV, Doctor / quacks.

Table 1 Shows patients' perception regarding role of anaesthetist inside & outside the operation theatre. Majority (80%) tribal patients' informed that anaesthetist works in Operation Theater only.

Table-1. Patients' perception regarding role of anaesthetist inside & outside the operation theatre

Patients response	Frequency(%)
Works in Operation Theater only	360(80)
Work's in Operation Theater as well as other places (I.C.U.,I.R.C.U.,etc.)	32 (7.1)
Don't know	58 (12.9)

Perception about pre-anaesthetic evaluation (P.A.E.) in this study is as follows. Total 95 (21.1%) respondents believed that "PAE is an investigation", 76 (16.9%) patients' said that "PAE is a Medicine", 162(36%) patients' were only aware that "It is physical checkup before operation" and 117(26%) patients' were blank and said "Don't know".

About 211 (46.9%) subjects did not know or they ignored question because of lack of knowledge. Total 79 (17.5%) were having wrong information and 160 (35.5%) knew the importance of written consent because they learned from surgeon or from their relatives or their own previous exposure to surgery.

Discussion: The study was conducted in a tertiary care hospital in Yavatmal district of Vidarbha. The lack of any data regarding awareness about anaesthesia among tribal area encouraged us to carry out the present study among the tribal population.

In this study overall 78% respondents were unaware about the term anaesthesia. Most of the patients' named anaesthesia as "Sungani". This shows higher rate of ignorance among the patients about anaesthesia because of illiteracy (67%) in this tribal population. Study conducted in urban area showed 67%(Keep PJ, Jenkins JR) and 89%(Guruna-

than U, Jacob R)patients' thought that anaesthetist was doctors respectively. Similarly in our study 64% respondents told that anaesthetist is a doctor. The reason may be information given by Out Patients Department's surgeon before sending these patients for pre-anaesthetic evaluation.

Regarding role of anaesthesiologist, one of the study showed 47% patients' felt that anaesthetist are responsible for "just keeping the patient asleep". We observed that only 22% patients' were aware about role of anaesthesiologist. This might be due to commonest reason for lack of knowledge was illiteracy, low socioeconomic status and occupation in tribal area. All factors reflects overall poor attitude towards health.

In one of the study more than 50% respondents gave equal or more importance to anaesthesiologist as compared to surgeon (Mittal MK, Sethi AK). We observed that only 14% respondents were aware about importance of the anaesthetist during operation, this reflects poor knowledge regarding the specialty anaesthesia.

Regarding source of information about anaesthesia, one of the study showed 61% subjects had gained information from personal experience i.e. surgery on self or from friend and relatives⁴. Similarly our study also observed that 63% subjects gained information from their past experiences. This shows that direct interaction between the patient and anaesthetist and time spent with patient by anaesthetist plays vital role in increasing the level of awareness amongst patients. In this study we observed that only 5% patients gained knowledge about this specialty through books, newspaper and other media of information. This reflects that literacy can definitely increase the level of understanding and arouse curiosity amongst the patients to certain extent.

In this study majority (80%) of the tribal patients' narrated that anaesthetist works in operation theatre. Only 7.11% patients' were aware about the role of anaesthetist outside the Operation Theater. This shows the lack of knowledge regarding precise nature of anaesthesiologist work amongst the tribal population.

About 64% patients were unaware about importance of preanaesthetic evaluation. Total 21.1% patients viewed PAE is an investigation and 16% patients viewed it as a medicine. This might be because of the trend of the surgeons advising PAE along with list of other investigations. This suggest communication gap between patients and Out Patients Department doctors. This also suggest that, the time spend by anaesthesiologist with patients during PAE may be inadequate.

Total 64% patients were unaware about the importance of written consent. This ignorance may be because of an overall lack of knowledge of the legal aspects of surgical procedures among the tribal populations. This unawareness may be because of limited time spend by the anaesthetist and surgeons with this tribal patients.

Though there is explosion of information technology, very few tribal patients' talked about anaesthesia as a specialty. Most of the patients (75%) referred to this hospital were from tribal or interior parts of district. It is important to have the knowledge of geographical as well as social aspects of this area, because patients taking treatment here are suffering from various medical problems arising out of

inadequate nutrition and unhygienic conditions in addition to illiteracy. It is expected that these patients may or may not be able to opine on the awareness of the anaesthesia specialty. Most of the studies were carried out in the urban population where, means of information and technology, communication and education etc. facilities were easily available. Tribal population has never been a focus of such studies and as expected remains neglected and ignorant about the awareness in social life and health services.

Before anaesthesia, face to face talk and counseling takes place only during pre-anaesthetic evaluation, hence PAE can play a crucial role in increasing the patients' knowledge and awareness directly. It should be mandatory to give adequate time for direct interaction with the patients' during this visit and achieve the goal of educating the patients in addition to their necessary vital checkup. This also helps to remove their fears and anxiety.

Lastly we strongly recommended that there is a strong need to educate the tribal patients' regarding role of anaesthetist by involving them in discussions, lectures, video presentations or demonstrations along with direct interaction with them.

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