

The Routine Emergency

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Abstract

That an emergency situation could be managed in a routine way may appear improbable, but the purpose of this presentation is to reflect on and suggest practical ways of achieving this.

The four stages of learning (Unconscious Incompetence -> Conscious incompetence -> Conscious Competence -> Unconscious Competence), will be discussed as background to the presentation. The use of reflection and its role in attaining deep learning, as well as leading to a better way of preparing for emergencies will be covered. A number of acronyms will be presented as memory aids to help direct self-reflection and coping when stressed. These include PATÉ, the VIP approach and COVER-ABCD.

The first two approaches have the benefit of guiding management. The third provides a check-list of 'what could possibly (have gone) wrong?'. An additional factor needs to be addressed, which is not covered by these algorithms: The management of stress on the part of the anaesthetist/intensivist.

A review of martial arts techniques and approach to emergencies (attack) is useful, and has parallels in anaesthesia. This will be touched upon briefly by way of illustration.

Two similar case scenarios with different causes will be presented in order to demonstrate the practical application of the points covers.

Summary

Guided experience during routine cases in anaesthesia and problem based hands-on theoretical and practical training with supervision has helped produce a world-class standard of care in anaesthesia and intensive care. We should all be rightly proud of this, but there is no formal training in stress management in medicine in general and anaesthesia/intensive care in particular. This appears to be a major deficiency in our training programs and should be addressed.

I recommend the following approach to the problem of 'The routine Emergency':

- Reflect on "what could possibly go wrong?" during routine cases.
- Adopt PATÉ.
- Think about the VIP approach.

- During emergencies: Relax, be aware, have faith in your training, keep breathing.

References:

http://www.apsf.com.au/crisis_management/crisis_management_manual.htm