An Anesthesia Safety Initiative: Implementation of a Pre-Anesthesia Checklist

Abstract

Anesthesia can be a hazardous practice as it involves rendering a patient unconscious and breathless to allow for surgical care. Expert clinical knowledge and the aid of anesthesia equipment make this feat possible. Adequate pre-anesthesia equipment preparation is vital. The most frequent complications related to anesthesia equipment malfunction are brain damage and death. Previously published and commonly cited FDA pre-anesthesia guidelines are not consistently utilized and the validity of these guidelines has been questioned. The Anesthesia Patient Safety Foundation (APSF) recognizes the reported failures of the FDA guidelines and published new pre-anesthesia guidelines that claim to be more user friendly. Principles of successful checklist design, implementation and compliance strategies were adapted from the aviation industry to create a pre-anesthesia checklist based on the APSF guidelines that is readily used, and true to its purpose of decreasing the risk of patient harm. Checklist creation and dissemination is described as part of an anesthesia safety initiative that includes supporting a culture of safety which recognizes the detrimental effects of noncompliance with pre-anesthesia checklist procedures.