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How Do Anesthesiologists Prefer to Reduce Preoperative Anxiety in Pediatric Patients?

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How Do Anesthesiologists Prefer to Reduce Preoperative Anxiety in Pediatric Patients?

Background: Preoperative anxiety (POA) is a ubiquitous phenomenon in pediatric patients undergoing surgery. POA describes a transient mental state that occurs prior to surgery and distinct from anxiety disorders. POA has been linked to increased postoperative pain, delayed wound healing, and other complications that extend beyond the immediate postoperative period.

Method: A cross-sectional study of the American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA) was performed to determine the preferences of anesthesiologists regarding POA in the United States. The study involved submitting an electronic survey consisting of 15 questions to the membership of the ASA. The survey included questions about the assessment and management of POA in the pediatric population.

Results: Of 3,235 respondents, the majority were attending anesthesiologists (n=2,827, 97.4%) and over one-third had completed a pediatric anesthesiology fellowship (n=829, 39.5%). Most anesthesiologists asked their patients about POA (n=1,956, 64.0%) and utilized anxiety medication (n=2,646, 90.0%), preoperative education about the procedure (n=1,872, 63.5%), and permitting family member presence (n=1,638, 55.5%) to reduce preoperative anxiety in pediatric patients.

Conclusions: Anesthesiologists in the United States appear to prefer to discuss POA with their patients. A sizeable number have completed subspecialty training in pediatric anesthesiology and utilize a variety of techniques to reduce anxiety in pediatric patients such as using medication, education, and family member presence.