Curriculum Survey of the Teaching of Anesthesiology in American Dental Schools*

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Anesthesiology is a subject which has taken on greater importance in the dental curriculum in recent years. There have been great scientific advances in the field, which have affected the teaching of anesthesiology to the undergraduate dental student and the graduate student. A survey was conducted by analyzing the catalogues of all American dental schools and by sending questionnaires to a selected number, in order to acquire information not available in the school catalogues.

DATA

Total number of American dental schools at time of survey—46.

Number of schools included in survey—44 (two new schools with incomplete programs were excluded).

Number of schools conducting lecture course in general anesthesia —44.

Number of schools conducting course in analgesia — 1 (administered by the Department of Oral Diagnosis and Roentgenology).

ANALYSIS OF SURVEY

1. Forty-two of 44 schools give a course in general anesthesia (lecture in all institutions and practical in some) which is conducted by the Departments of Oral Surgery.

2. One school has a completely independent Department of Anesthesia with a teaching staff of seven. The dentist in charge of the Department has the academic rank of Professor.

3. The other school with an autonomous Department of Anesthesia, gives a course in general anesthesia composed only of lectures (with observation of general anesthesia in an associated hospital). The course is taught by a physician with the academic rank of Associate Professor of Anesthesia. Local anesthesia is taught by the Department of Oral Surgery in this school.

4. An accurate evaluation of the

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teaching of local anesthesia in American dental schools is almost impossible. The great majority of the schools include the principles of local anesthesia in the course on oral surgery, including instruction in the use of local anesthetic drugs. The catalogues and questionnaires reveal that most schools have a rather loose relationship between departments in which local anesthesia is used; e.g. operative dentistry, crown and bridge, endodontics, etc.

**OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

General anesthesia and local anesthesia lectures, demonstrations, and practice are given to dental students, in the overwhelming majority of schools, by oral surgeons or members of the teaching staffs of Departments of Oral Surgery.

There is a sound historical relationship between oral surgery and anesthesiology, particularly general anesthesia. Nevertheless, dental educators must decide in the future whether this complex aspect of dental practice should continue to be taught by Departments of Oral Surgery, or whether separate Departments of Anesthesiology might not be better equipped to handle this phase of dental education more adequately.

Anesthesia, local or general, is an inextricable part of the overall practice of dentistry. As such, its relationship to oral surgery on the educational level seems open to reevaluation.

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**Malpractice as Related to the Anesthesiologist***

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Malpractice, as defined by Black's Law, is "the bad, wrong, or injurious treatment of a patient professionally, resulting in injury, unnecessary suffering, or death to the patient, and proceeding from ignorance, carelessness, want of professional skill, disregard for established rules or principles, neglect, or a malicious criminal intent."

Malpractice may be criminal ("violation of a penal law in the management of a case by a physician who thereby subjects himself to prosecution by the State"); or it may be civil ("wherein a physician had inflicted injury or death upon a patient by his treatment, but not in violation of any statute of criminal law").

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