How to navigate the anesthesiologist-surgeon relationship

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Staff News Writer

When most think about the operating room, they often picture the surgeon and patient. However, surgical care is built on triadic relationships between surgeons, anesthesiologists and patients. By working together, surgeons and anesthesiologists can motivate best possible outcomes for patients.

But these physicians are often separated by a surgical drape that can represent different perspectives about what good patient care means. Understanding the anesthesiologist-surgeon relationship is key to providing proper patient care in every situation.

The April issue of AMA Journal of Ethics® (@JournalofEthics) features numerous perspectives on anesthesiologist-surgeon relationships and gives you an opportunity to earn CME credit.

Articles include:

“How should trainees’ influences on postoperative outcomes be disclosed?”
Two pediatric cases highlight risks of prolonging anesthetic exposure for training purposes and prompt questions about influences of surgical training on outcomes.

“Who should manage a patient’s airway?”
Ear, nose and throat procedures in intraoperative environments often involve surgeons’ and anesthesiologists’ use of shared and sometimes competing approaches to managing a patient’s airway.

“What should an anesthesiologist and surgeon do when they disagree about terms of perioperative DNR suspension?”
Using alternative anesthesia techniques requires collaborative decision making that expresses a patient's best interest.

“How should a surgeon and anesthesiologist cooperate during intraoperative cardiac arrest?”
Surgeons and anesthesiologists each have a unique sense of duty to patients to clarify which factors might influence outcomes after intraoperative cardiac arrest.

Listen and learn

In the journal's April podcast, Sara Scarlet, MD, MPH, a surgeon, and Patricia Doerr, MD, an anesthesiologist, discuss their perspectives on surgeon-anesthesiologist relationships, including cross training.

Dr. Scarlet is a chief resident in general surgery at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She plans to pursue a career in trauma surgery and critical care.

Dr. Doerr is a fourth-year anesthesiology resident at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She plans to practice general anesthesia and pain medicine and to contribute to the development of enhanced recovery after surgery pathways.

Listen to previous episodes of the podcast, “Ethics Talk,” or subscribe in iTunes or other services.

Earn CME

The AMA Journal of Ethics CME module, “How Should Trainees' Influences on Postoperative Outcomes Be Disclosed?” is designated by the AMA for a maximum of 1 AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™.

Additionally, the CME module, “Ethics Talk: Beyond the Drape in Surgeon-Anesthesiologist Relationships,” is designated by the AMA for a maximum of 0.5 AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™.

The offerings are part of the AMA Ed Hub™, an online platform that brings together high-quality CME, maintenance of certification, and educational content—in one place—with relevant learning activities,
automated credit tracking and reporting for some states and specialty boards.

Learn more about AMA CME accreditation.

Submit manuscripts and artwork

The journal’s editorial focus is on commentaries and articles that offer practical advice and insights for medical students and physicians. Submit a manuscript for publication.

The 2020 John Conley Ethics Essay Contest and the Conley Art of Medicine Contest are now open for submission. Read the essay prompt and see visual media requirements on the AMA Journal of Ethics website.

Apply to become a theme issue editor to help the journal develop theme issues on interested and neglected topics.

A look ahead

Upcoming issues of the AMA Journal of Ethics will focus on sharing health decisions as well as portraiture in health care. Sign up to receive email alerts when new issues are published.

If you’re in Chicago during the summer of 2020, join the AMA Journal of Ethics in supporting art, medicine, and the exhibit, “Portraits in Health Care,” featuring paintings of patients and caregivers by artist Mark Gilbert, PhD.