

# Litigation and The Anaesthetist: A Review

Type of Article: Abstract

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## BACKGROUND

Healthcare litigation is increasingly common and represents a significant cost in healthcare expenditure. The immediate goal of any anesthetist is to ensure that key components of care are effectively delivered and safety maintained throughout. In spite of these goals anesthetists in our environment are now being faced with risk of litigation. It is thus imperative that the anesthetist is more aware of this risk.

## METHODS

A review of the literature of the subject through online search was utilized.

## RESULTS

The common reasons for litigation against the anesthetist include damage to the teeth during general anaesthesia, mishaps from over dosage, technical failure, equipment failure, negligence, ventilation problems, oesophageal intubation, patient awareness, drug errors, anaphylaxis and even death. Litigations may also arise due to peripheral nerve injuries, injuries from positioning, direct needle damage during regional anaesthesia, inadequate padding and poor positioning.

## CONCLUSION

Any form of anaesthetic intervention does carry an element of risk. Some of these risks result from human errors and are avoidable. Peripheral nerve injury which can be severe and result in permanent disability is usually avoidable. Anaesthetist should adopt risk preventive attitudes such as accurate drug labeling, good positioning, and calling for help when in need and good record keeping to avoid litigation.

**Keywords:** Anaesthetist injuries; Patient Litigation.

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