



# Prophylactic Education: Don't Leave Yourself Unprotected

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I feel fortunate and thankful to be practicing within a profession that has afforded me an opportunity to provide dental anesthesia for my patients. Along with that opportunity comes the responsibility of practicing to a high standard of care that the public has grown to respect, expect, and trust.

The ability to administer this form of anesthesia is a privilege given to us by our state, which represents the public and our peers. They do that because we, the dental community, through dental board oversight, have demonstrated the ability to deliver anesthesia in a safe and effective way. This privilege has been based on decades of providing superb dental anesthesia, hard work, and goodwill that dentists have garnered over the years.

Those of us in dentistry who practice anesthesia and sedation modalities must be vigilant to provide these services in a safe and effective manner. Our colleagues in dentistry and medicine, as well as the public that we are privileged to serve, will always "hold our feet to the fire" when it comes to providing these services safely. We are proud of our heritage with the knowledge that dentists invented anesthesia (Horace Wells, DDS, 1844; William Morton, DDS, 1846).

Many of us have seen what consequences can occur when an anesthetic gets out of hand, resulting in a bad outcome. Patients are not expected to have bad events in dental offices. In the minds of the consumers, poor results are reserved for the severely ill patient

in the hospital. Patient selection is the No. 1 issue related to the majority of bad outcomes. Deciding whether the patient needs to be treated in the office will always be a topic for discussion and critique. Therefore, the optimal evaluation and diagnosis must never be compromised because of monetary reward.

In the past century, all that was necessary to deliver anesthesia was a mask or IV, and the rest was in the eyes of the beholder. Today, every dentist who wants to provide anesthesia in the office needs to obtain a permit and be trained in emergency procedures. When general anesthesia was no longer allowed in Florida following a rash of deaths in plastic surgery offices, dentists were allowed to continue delivering anesthesia. In Florida, dentists are self-policed and maintain an exceptional level of care. The judge adjudicating the matter was impressed by the way dentistry examined their doctors, making sure they were practicing to a standard consistent with patient safety. The judge admonished the physicians, that they could learn a lot about governance of peers from the dentists.



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These are good times for dentistry because of our anesthetic capabilities. The public is becoming more aware of alternatives to a “white knuckled” visit to the dentist. There are so many ways a patient can receive alternative treatment for anxiety and pain control: oral sedation, light IV sedation, deep IV sedation, and general anesthesia are available in the dental office. We have come a long way in patient management.

Of course, all this comes with a price of vigilance and continuing education. As a past president of the Dental Board of California, I encourage all dentists who engage in the delivery of

any form of anesthesia and/or sedation to join and become an active member in organizations that promote broad-based, academic education in anesthesia. As an excellent example of this type of organization, the American Dental Society of Anesthesiology recognizes and supports all levels of sedation and anesthesia delivery, and therefore brings all of dentistry under one roof. There is no substitute for continuing education, especially when it is offered by an organization that is chartered to deliver the finest anesthesia programs available. ADSA does not sell anything, nor does it try to promote specific sedation or

anesthesia practices. It exists to educate because education is what it does best.

ADSA works hard to offer outstanding and clinically relevant education programs to the multitiered system of members. There is something for everyone. There is no substitute for a highly qualified organization that has only one focus: education, education, education. Remember, there is no replacement for a highly qualified organization that commands the respect of the dental profession. ADSA should be the official home for all dentists who are in pursuit of excellence in sedation and anesthesia.

So what are you waiting for? In California alone, there are more than 400 members in the California Dental Society of Anesthesiology, which is a very significant number. This size was attained by explaining to dentists how important quality sedation and anesthesia education is, and that there is no substitute for aligning with an organization that has an impeccable track record. Dr. Gary Chan, our CDSA president, has been working very diligently in an attempt to set up meetings that will not only interest California practitioners, but dentists from all over the country.

The next time you receive a mailing or attend an ADSA meeting, please remind yourself to join. You will be happy you did knowing this membership helps to reinforce your education as well as the credibility that belonging to a well-respected organization has to offer. Cream still floats to the top, so join today and secure your future. When a lawyer asks you “So tell me doctor, how do you stay current with your anesthesia continuing education?” your answer should be “I’m a member of the ADSA.” ■■■■

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