
Letter to the Editor: Ether Anesthesia

R Hayner

Citation

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Abstract

DEAR READERS OF THE INTERNET JOURNAL OF ANESTHESIOLOGY

My name is Rick Hayner, I am 48 years of age, totally blind, and have mild Cerebral Palsy since birth. I have had 23 operations, and 15 of them were done under ether anesthesia. The reason I became interested in the field of anesthesiology is because of the tremendous difference between the last two ether inductions.

The first 14 inductions were done with an anesthesia machine. The Anesthesiologist started with nitrous oxide, oxygen and gradually added the ether to the mixture. This induction was very pleasant and didn't give me any strange sensations with. It was almost like laying in bed and falling asleep. I had been asked to breathe deeply. I was told that the deeper I breathed, the faster I would go to sleep. I was premedicated with vistryl and atropine.

Then I received an open drop induction which was done without any premedication whatsoever. I remember being put on the operating table, and a wet towel or washcloth was put over my eyes.

The Doctor who gave me the ether this time was our family doctor. He had been my friend as well as my doctor for all of my life. I loved this man as if he were my own father. Doctor Fox was in his mid 60s at this time. He then told me he was going to put the mask on my face. I noticed that there was no gas flow at all during this induction, where as I could hear the gas flow during the previous inductions.

Doctor Fox then put the mask on my face. As I remember, it didn't actually touch my face in any way, but it was like he held it just above my face. I decided to do exactly what I had done before, and tried to take a big deep breath. The result was that I coughed so violently that my head began to ache. I tried 4 more times, with exactly the same result. For about the next 5 minutes, I did everything within my power to get my face away from that mask. I remember that I did not try

and use my hands, and why that was I'll never know. The final act was to sit up on the table, and all of a sudden, there were about 4 people restraining me.

However, they didn't have to restrain me for long, because the first of 4 sensations began at that point. The first sensation was a tingling sensation that was in my lips, fingers, and toes. If I remained perfectly still, the tingling wasn't too bad. However, if I fought, or tried to move, the tingling became far worse. Because of this, I didn't fight any more.

The second sensation was sort of a floating sensation. It was almost as though the table was no longer below me. It didn't really scare me that much, but it seemed kind of strange. By the way, all 4 sensations were occurring at the same time at the end of what I remember of the induction.

The third sensation was that my breathing acquired a pitch of around 110 hertz. it was in perfect rhythm with my breathing. The last sensation was what happened to my hearing. Sounds that were very close to me didn't change at all. However, sounds farther away than say 5 or 6 feet began to echo in very strange rhythm patterns with one beat of the three beat pattern slightly louder than the other two. When I first heard a sound, it would sound extremely loud. After that, the echoing began. The first echo was very soft, and then the echoes became louder and louder and faster and faster until the echoes got very distorted and ran together and finally disappeared. At this time all of my senses were totally strange. If someone touched me, it almost felt as though they were hitting me.

About at this time, someone dropped something made of metal, like a bucket or bed pan or something like this outside of the or. The volume of this sound was tremendous. I tell people that it sounded like someone dropping a 50 pound weight from a set of barbells from a height of perhaps 80 or 90 feet onto a concrete sidewalk. The only difference was

the tremendous echoing that occurred. These four sensations became less noticeable and less noticeable until I finally went to sleep.

I remember hearing the pa system when I first started to wake up, and the voices echoed in the same way as they did when I went to sleep, but not nearly as loud. I think I woke up faster than I went to sleep. I also remember how strange water tasted after I woke up.

If you know any anesthesiologists who are old enough to remember giving ether, or who use ether in their research, I'd be very interested in hearing from them. My e-mail address is rhayner@complink.net

COMMENT FROM THE EDITOR

I would like to encourage anesthesiologists who are experienced in ether anesthesia to contact Rick Hayner. Rick is blind and uses a text based program with speech output to read e-mail messages and access the Internet pages. However, he can't click on symbols to go to different links. If anybody knows a program with special browser abilities

for the blind please contact me at wenker@ispub.com or Rick directly at rhayner@complink.net.

Browsing through the "Recordings For The Blind And Dyslexic Catalog", Rick found the audio book "Anesthesia, the third edition" edited by Ronald D. Miller. It is on 90 cassettes, and due to the recording technique, and the special machines he uses to play the tapes, each tape plays for a total of 4 hours.

Rick read the entire first volume of that book around 6 times. He ordered chemistry books to help him understand the chemistry behind drug uptake and metabolism. He spent hundreds of hours reading this book, and learning more and more about our specialty. He might know more about the theoretical background of some anesthesiology aspects than we anesthesiologists do. We are proud that Rick Hayner agreed to join the editorial board of The Internet Journal of Anesthesiology and represent lay persons in the board. Our editorial board is looking forward to getting his input.

References

Author Information

Rick Hayner