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VIEWPOINT: Employing People to accompany the Patient to reduce Anxiety in the Operating Room

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There is growing evidence that the anxiety of surgical candidates has a devastating effect on surgical outcomes. However, the reality is that every day we all face anxious patients who are candidates for surgery. Some time ago, my friend and I went to the operating room of a hospital for internship. In the afternoon, when our internship was over, I waited at the entrance of the operating room for my friend to leave the hospital. Meanwhile, I saw an old woman on a wheelchair waiting next to me to be taken to the operating room. I started talking to her to spend time. I asked her about her surgery, whether she had ever had surgery before, or how old she was and so on. My friend came a few minutes later. I said goodbye to the old woman to leave her, but the old woman told me please do not go anywhere. She asked me to stay with her while she was in the operating room.

The old woman was suffering from anxiety that day and she was afraid of the surgery, but the warm conversation I had with her greatly reduced her anxiety and fear, and therefore she wanted that I stay with her before and after the surgery.

Patients usually suffer from a high degree of anxiety before surgery and are also scared. In a study conducted by Nasiri et al. (1) on 300 patients before surgery, it was found that 64.8% of patients experienced high anxiety before surgery.

These anxieties have many negative effects on the patient such as increasing blood pressure and heart rate or may cause bleeding. It has also been shown that preoperative anxiety is directly associated with post-operative pain (2).

Due to the negative effects of anxiety, treatment staff attempt to reduce the patient's anxiety and fear in some way or other; for example, in a number of Iranian hospitals, Diazepam is injected to patients the night before surgery, or the walls of the hospital are painted green or light blue to calm patients, and so forth.

One of the activities that can be done to alleviate patients' anxiety is to have a companion in the operating room. From the experience we gained during the internship and residency, we found that talking to patients can greatly reduce their anxiety and fear. Perhaps one of the reasons for this finding is the information we give to the patients. In the study of Nasiri et al. (1), it was found that patients' anxiety had a positive relationship with their desire to obtain surgical and anesthesiology information, such that patients with high anxiety tend to receive more knowledge about surgery and anesthesia. Patients have different questions such as the duration of surgery or the amount of pain after surgery and so on. If these questions are answered, the anxiety will be reduced in patients to some extent. If a person accompanies the patient and talks to him/her from the time they enter the operating room until they are completely unconscious, the patients' anxiety and worry will be reduced dramatically. This is true even for children. The first author of this paper spent some time

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as an intern at a Burn Hospital. During that time, many children were admitted to the hospital with burns. The children commonly cried and were restless because of pain, fear and anxiety. The author stood by those children at that time both before and after the surgery, talking to them and giving them hope. As long as the first author was by their side, they were usually very calm and less agitated. The same was true of other children in other hospitals.

If everyone in the operating room is accompanied by a hospital staff member to talk to them and answer their questions until they are unconscious, the anxiety and worry will be greatly reduced in patients. In the long run, it will have significant financial and benefits for hospitals and insurance companies.

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