

INTRODUCTION

Every year in the United States more than 30,000,000 surgical procedures are performed under anesthesia. This means that every six to seven years, one of us may need to be rolled into that cold, unfamiliar chamber filled with high-tech gizmos and instruments called the operating room. There we entrust our lives, handing over full authority and control to highly trained professionals, albeit for a short period of time. In some instances, life-saving decisions are made in seconds and that is when all those decades of training and experience come into play.

For most of us, it is that feeling of losing control and the

fear of the unknown that make this experience a rather freaky one. But wait. Like everything else, when you shed light on the problem, you will start to understand it, analyze it, and in the case of anesthesia and surgery, you may even start to appreciate what the science of medicine has achieved to provide us with a smooth sailing through what historically has been one of the most challenging obstacles in human physiology.

In my 14 years of practice as an anesthesiologist, I have come across people from all walks of life and backgrounds. From superstitious to highly educated, analytic personalities, from easy going to the worry wart. We all have concerns when faced with surgery. Some of us deal with our fears and concerns quietly, and the rest of us express ourselves more openly, seeking answers and reassurances.

“I don’t want to feel anything or hear anything when i am in surgery. What

if i don't wake up? I hate needles. I am claustrophobic. I get really sick after anesthesia. I may be pregnant. I have allergies. How do you know that i am adequately anesthetized?"

These are but a few of the questions and comments made by most of us as we face the seemingly unknown world of anesthesia. And one can only appreciate the ever escalating levels of concern as the air waves and television screens are flooded with anesthetic related horror stories. Through the years, as I see patients prepare to undergo a surgical procedure, amazingly many of the same concerns are echoed.

Therefore, I felt compelled to work on a manuscript that would address, in simple terms, the most commonly asked questions and alleviate concerns by explaining some of the misconceptions related to the anesthetic experience. This information should also provide you with the peace of mind that going under anesthesia is safer than ever. *"BEFORE*

YOU GO UNDER” is the result of this effort. The information provided in this manuscript will not only shed light on the events that occur behind the closed doors of the operating room, but also will empower you with the knowledge to ask all the pertinent questions, assuring delivery of quality health care that you deserve. Having said that, let us begin to relieve your anxieties, clear the air of the mist of misconceptions, and let science be your guide to excellent surgical and anesthetic outcomes.