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## Waking Up Safer? AN ANESTHESIOLOGIST'S RECORD

Dr. Berend Mets, Chair of the Department of Anesthesiology and Perioperative Medicine at Penn State University's Hershey Medical Center wrote a book with the above title. Before we get into

the contents of the book, we should discuss whether our patients are safer now under anesthesia when compared to years past. Are our patients safer? Without question; yes! Advances in technology, pharmacology, education and team development have assured that. Have we reached the pinnacle in patient safety under anesthesia? I sure hope not and feel comfortable that the answer is "no".

Technology is continuing to improve right in front of our eyes, medications are becoming more precise in their mechanisms of action and their removal from the site of action and the body, and education is advancing with the birth of simulation and other new intellectual tools such as the Vortex. Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) has demonstrated the benefits of a team approach uniting the professional silos into one mega-team with constant interaction.

Anesthesiology has gone from the presence of a pulse to automated blood pressure measurement, pulse oximetry, continuous ECG, ETCO<sub>2</sub>, BIS monitoring, cerebral oximetry, invasive and noninvasive flow monitoring as well as the electronic medical record. We went from minimal data to possibly too much data to sift through and too many distractions. Our next major step forward may be ways to eliminate extraneous data and distractions; not more data but better data. We will never reach 100% safe, but that will always be the ultimate goal.

*Waking Up Safer? An Anesthesiologist's Record* is Dr. Mets' personal journey as an anesthesiologist intertwined with the growth of the practice of anesthesiology as it pertains to making our specialty safer for our most coveted assets; our patients. The book bounces flawlessly back and forth between the two. Dr. Mets walks us through the dawn of anesthesia as well as the dawn of his career in South Africa treating Zulu patients who had bludgeoned and stabbed each other during weekend drunken battles. It is hard to believe that a gentleman still very active in his

field started by giving an anesthetic with just a manual blood pressure cuff and a finger on the pulse, and with very little attending oversight.

Many books have been written on anesthesia history; many have described the exploits of Horace Wells and Thomas Morton. But, none have been written to be so easily understood by the lay-person; by the patient. Dr. Mets does just that in "Waking Up Safer?" by very deliberately and eloquently explaining procedures, anesthetics and technology, so that the every-day individual can follow along and appreciate the art of anesthesiology. Any patient can read this book and be amazed at the genius of our ancestors; and the time and work required to acquire the knowledge and skill by the anesthesiologist, nurse anesthetist, anesthesiologist assistant, anesthesia technologist, and many other perioperative team members who get individuals of all ages and health safely through the perioperative process.

Everyone 'medical or non-medical' will read this book and realize that anesthesia is not synonymous with sleep, and that while under the effects of anesthetics many monitors, medications, machines and people are needed to keep them alive and well.

I especially enjoyed chapter 11 as Dr. Mets walks us through Valentine's Day in the operating room complex at one of my favorite places, Penn State University Hershey Medical Center. Since I am so familiar with the surroundings, I could easily visualize the O.R. and the people as he describes the effort and coordination required to get dozens of patients safely through surgery on one of the most important days for romantics. On that day he gave a flawless anesthetic for a gynecologic procedure utilizing DaVinci robot. His skill assured that his patient, Jill would "Wake Up Safe" after the anesthetic to the delight of her husband, Jack. "Jack and Jill", therefore, went home soon afterwards very happy with their anesthesia care.

In closing, I recommend this book to anesthesiologists, students and the curious patients who want a better understanding of what anesthesiology really is, and where it came from, as well as one man's journey to reach the peak of an anesthesia career. By the way, the book ends with a glimpse of the future of anesthesiology, or maybe its end; and the dawn of perioperative medicine. ■