

Making Modern Medicine Possible

Tips for conducting a successful anesthesia interview

By Susan G. Dobbs Curling, M.D., M.B.A.

First Impressions Count

Introduce yourself to the patient and explain your education, professional certification and years of experience. Make eye contact; exhibit good posture and an appropriate, professional tone. If you are newly graduated, state that you have recently completed your training and are knowledgeable regarding state-of-the-art treatment modalities. You will use ALL of your experience and education to provide the very safest medical care for them.

Wear business attire or a lab coat, if possible. If you display your name and "physician" on your nametag, lab coat or scrubs, it will reemphasize your position in the care team. Sit down when at all possible, as it can increase the perceived time spent during an interview and makes you appear unrushed, even when you are. Avoid technical jargon. Never underestimate the healing power of touch. A touch on the arm or hand imparts your compassion and volumes of comfort.

Pay Attention to Detail

Have some general information prior to arrival at the bedside, but spend most of your chart review time next to the patient. The patient knows how precious a doctor's time is, and the extra moments you spend beside him or her are significantly appreciated. If you have evaluated the patient's echocardiogram and EKGs or other studies, you should tell him or her. This informs the patient of your capabilities and also your concern for his or her overall health. As you thumb through the chart, inform the patient of lab values and their normality or significance. If another anesthesiologist has evaluated their readiness for anesthesia, you should mention that your colleague left notes for you. This informs the patient of the extra time and care that the anesthesia physicians have spent concerned about your patient's welfare.

Clarify the Care Team Model

If you use a care team model (supervising a nurse anesthetist or AA), be sure to explain that to the patient. Assure him or her that you are the physician who will lead the care team. Introduce the patient to the CRNA or AA that you work with and tell the patient that you will be supervising his or her care, but that the CRNA/AA is experienced and capable.

Provide an Accurate Timeline

Give accurate time estimations for the procedures and wait time, the surgeon's arrival time or test timing. Never underestimate. Update the patient with changes in the schedule or delays.

Be Thankful

Thank the patient for choosing your hospital and for their communication and cooperation. Explain that in addition to a (board certified) anesthesia physician, he or she will have a registered nurse, a surgical tech and a well-trained surgeon caring for them. Positioning the team well will help support the patient's feeling of confidence and safety. Thank the family for being there to support the patient. Explain step by step what will happen.

Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

Always ask if they have any other questions. Assure the patient that you have the time to respond. Ask if there is anything you can do to make them comfortable. Let them know that, as a physician, you can help him or her navigate this surgical experience. If the patient has questions about things other than anesthesia, as a physician, you can answer them or aid them in getting the answers. Give the patient a business card with contact numbers, a phone number or other way to reach you if they have a question.

Tell the patient that your goal is for him or her to have a *very good* surgical and anesthetic experience. If there is something that causes his or her experience to be less than very good, ask them to tell you what that is so the process can be improved or it can be immediately addressed.

This sounds like a lengthy process, but these scripts can be incorporated into your present practice. These are based on tested principles, the perception of you as a professional anesthesiologist and your patient satisfaction will improve.

About the Author

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