

Appendix 4: Student & Personnel Notice of Waste Anesthetic Gases

Our concern about your health and the quality of our environment requires that we periodically bring to your attention the suspected occupational hazards associated with working in anesthetizing locations such as the prep area and operating room.

Epidemiologic surveys suggest that there may be increased incidences of some diseases, particularly those associated with the reproductive process, in operating room employees.

While chronic occupational exposure to trace concentrations of anesthetic gases is a suspected cause of disease entities, the evidence is equivocal. Thus, conclusive proof of cause is presently not available. Indeed, other factors, such as the stress of working in the operating room, have also been proposed as causes of these health hazards.

Fortunately, anesthetic exposure can be reduced substantially. A comprehensive protection program is in effect in our surgical operating room. Equipment maintenance has reduced leakage to a minimum by proper maintenance. Excess anesthetic circuit gases are captured and vented at a point where no personnel exposure occurs.

A frequently raised question is whether students who are pregnant or who are contemplating pregnancy should work in the operating room. A definite answer cannot be given, and the data is not strong enough to remove all such students from the operating room. With the above factors in mind, we have attempted to make our operating area as safe as possible by our concerted efforts to hold anesthetic exposure to a minimum. However, no "safe" exposure level below which we can be sure that adverse effects will not occur has yet been identified. You must decide whether to accept the potential risks of working in anesthetizing areas. Should you have any questions or concerns, we urge that you consult with your physician or obstetrician.

Whether pregnant or not, if students prefer not to have any exposure to trace gases, then they need to choose an alternative course of study. Every graduate must complete all AVMA-required hands-on tasks to graduate, which include anesthetizing animals with inhalation anesthetics. Every effort will be made to minimize exposure.

To show that you have received and understand this notice, please sign below and return it to us. Thank you for your cooperation.

I have read and understand this notice.

Name (signed and printed)

Date