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Dental Board of California Makes Determination - San Francisco

The Dental Board of CA (DBC) met again, this time in San Francisco for a two-day meeting. Part of this meeting focused on the Pediatric Anesthesia Report (PAR) and the deadline of next month for their recommendations to the legislature in response to Caleb's Law.

As you may remember, I traveled north 3 other times to testify in front of the DBC to advocate in regard to the single operator anesthesia model, where the dental profession simultaneously performs the anesthesia without a second trained and competent professional in the room to monitor the patient's airway and level of sedation.

The DBC took public comments after each specific section of their PAR. This event was broadcast live via webcam in addition to having two media representatives present, NBC Bay Area and NBC Dateline. There were representatives and individuals there to speak from: CA Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons, California Dental Association, CA Society of Pediatric Dentists, CA Society of Anesthesiologists (CSA), CA Society of Dentist Anesthesiologists, CA Academy of Periodontists, as well as the public, including families, such as Caleb's aunt, Dr. Anna Kaplan. I was there representing AAP-CA.

They reviewed the findings of the pediatric anesthesia subcommittee based on comparing laws from other states, reviewing the medical and dental literature, case reporting, the challenge of reaching a consensus between all interested parties balanced by the current standards with evidence based practices. They felt that they currently practice to an adequate standard, but acknowledged that more safeguards could be added.

Board President Steve Morrow, DDS acknowledged the lack of data for pediatric dental office-based mortalities, but he also considered heavily the subject matter opinion of various professionals who commented during this entire process.

They recognized the difficulty with data collection and would be requesting near-miss reporting on a voluntary basis as well as mandatory reporting of all cases transferred to a hospital. They created three permit holder categories, divided into under age 7-year-old, 7-year-old to age 13-year-old, and above 13-year-old through adult.

During the various discussions, they also pondered how requiring additional safeguards would impact the cost of dental care.

Interestingly in dentistry, they get credit for cases in residency — whereas in medicine, our proctoring begins at the attending level.

The CSA discussed how moderate sedation means by definition that the patient is actually able to talk and communicate.

As the time got nearer for me to speak, I used a new function on my iWatch labeled “breathe.” I focused on my breathing as I felt my heart rate begin to increase.

Next they discussed the general anesthesia permit process. I followed Dr. Annie Kaplan, Caleb’s aunt, during the public comment section. My statement focused on 3 points.

- Who we are as the AAP-CA and the fact that we have no financial stake in this cause.
- The single operator anesthesia model is not an appropriate standard of care for our patients.
- The fact that they did not follow our recommendations previously and that we would continue our advocacy efforts.

Lastly, I closed with our statement, “Not one more child should suffer a potentially preventable death in the dental setting.”

The non-clinical members of the DBC requested further discussion amongst themselves regarding the public comments on general anesthesia. Some of the non-clinical members volunteered their own experiences. One had a child that had 8 dental procedures, all with a dentist anesthesiologist, to which she added she did not know that dentists were allowed to do the procedures performed on her child without a separate anesthesia provider in attendance — the commonly used oral surgery practice. Another discussed his recent colonoscopy, which was accompanied by an anesthesiologist. He queried as to why children didn’t need a second trained and competent anesthesia provider in the room to monitor the anesthesia.

Suddenly, Dr. Morrow stated that he felt they needed to have an additional provider in the room holding a pediatric general anesthesia permit for those children under age 7-year-old undergoing general anesthesia and separate from the operating dentist. In

fact, the operating dentist did not need to hold a general anesthesia permit as they would not be performing the sedation or anesthesia. By a 11-3 vote, this motion passed with the addition of a dental assistant trained in PALS assist the anesthesia provider to be present as the third required person along with the operating dentist and separate anesthesia provider.

Dr. Annie Kaplan turned to me and asked, “What just happened here? Did what I think happened, just happen? Did they just ban the single operator anesthesia model in children under age 7-year-old undergoing general anesthesia?” We shared a fist bump and a smile, or was that a smirk?

As they say, the ~~third~~ fourth time is a charm...

The deed was done as they say. The CDB will recommend to the legislature that for under age 7-year-old a separate pediatric General Anesthesia permit holder is required for general anesthesia.

After the fact, Annie stated that Dr. Hill’s representative was concerned about the funding issues mentioned in making that happen.

As we left the DBC meeting, NBC Bay Area followed us out of the room and asked me about that final decision. We did a brief interview with NBC Bay Area to air possibly Monday December 5th. They asked about children age 8-13-year-old; I stated we care for all children and feel an 8 to 13-year-old is just as important as a child under age 7-year-old. We would take this victory as a foot in the door.

They then asked how I was feeling, I said, “ECSTATIC!”

Unbelievable, this was advocacy in action. Given the tone of the meetings and reception to us previously, this change of events caught all of us by surprise.

Next, these recommendations from the DBC will go back to the legislature, where new law may be created regarding the practice of dental anesthesia.

Here is the link for the NBC Bay Area coverage for the San Francisco meeting:

<http://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/local/Changes-To-Dental-Anesthesia-Lie-Ahead-405115246.html>

Related articles previously published in Peds@CA2 eNews

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