

Abstract

Background

Providing patients with safe, timely, and adequate anaesthesia care during emergency- and disaster relief operations is challenging for medical personnel. Many of the skills needed are not part of a standard anaesthesia training-program. An exploratory study was conducted aiming at identifying needed knowledge and skills. In addition, a curriculum for a short course was developed to provide anaesthesiologists with the possibility to acquire essential skills prior to deployment.

Methods

A questionnaire was designed, containing 27 quantitative and qualitative questions. Contact was established with major deploying agencies. The curriculum is the basis for a five-day short-course, designed in collaboration with deploying agencies.

Results

121 invitations to participate in the questionnaires were sent out, the return rate was 51%. Sixty-five per cent of the respondents did not participate in a relevant preparatory course and 23% did not feel sufficiently prepared. A five-day course was designed assisting participants to formulate, apply, and compare concepts and principles of anaesthesia in complex emergencies. The course includes epidemiology, disaster preparedness, anaesthesia equipment, drugs, regional anaesthesia as well as critical care medicine. Furthermore, medical management as well as psychology are covered.

Discussion

Insufficient preparedness was perceived by the respondents and added to the low rate of participation in pre-deployment courses. Many anaesthesiologists were working with unfamiliar equipment and anaesthetics, lacking specific techniques, as well as maintenance and repair skills. This can lead to precarious and potentially life threatening situations. Consequently, physicians and deploying agencies alike should be strongly encouraged to improve preparedness for anaesthesia personnel. The course curriculum

developed forms a basis for improving preparedness of anaesthesiologists in the light existing shortcomings.