

How Anesthesiologists Practice Better Medicine

According to an article in *The Wall Street Journal*, in the early 1980s nearly 1 in 5,000 human patients died under general anesthesia. Under threat from constant lawsuits and skyrocketing malpractice insurance premiums, anesthesiologists discovered how important monitoring could be to improving patient outcomes.

In a study of 5,000 patients who had died, it was determined that in a vast majority of the cases, had CO₂ and O₂ levels been monitored, and the patient's temperature managed better, the patient may have lived. Since CO₂ monitoring had been the main factor in 6 of 7 cases, the ASA set CO₂ monitoring as a standard of practice, and as it has become routine, less than 1 in 200,000 - 300,000 patients die under general anesthesia. As a result, anesthesiologists enjoy some of the lowest insurance premiums among the medical specialties today. (Hallinan, 2005)

Hallinan, J. T. (2005, June 21). Heal thyself (Once seen as risky, one group of doctors changes its ways...). *The Wall Street Journal*, p. A1.