

## THE ROLE OF ANAESTHETISTS-Who are we and what do we do?

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### INTRODUCTION

❖ Anaesthetists have an essential place in peri-operative patient management and their role extends beyond the realms of theatre. However, in our clinical practice we encountered several patients who were uncertain about the role of the anaesthetist and unaware that they were trained doctors.

❖ A previous study in the UK performed in 1994<sup>1</sup> revealed that only 25% of patients were aware that the duties of an anaesthetist extended beyond the operating theatre doors.

❖ 35% of patients did not realise that anaesthetists were doctors.

❖ A more recent study in Ireland<sup>2</sup> concluded that 78% of patients knew that anaesthetists were doctors. However, 30% were unaware that anaesthetists have a role outside of theatre.

❖ Our aim was to determine the current beliefs and knowledge held by the patients in our hospital.

❖ We assessed the knowledge of 134 elective surgical patients about anaesthesia, the role of the anaesthetist and satisfaction with the anaesthetic consent process. We included patients who had previous anaesthetic experience and those who had none.

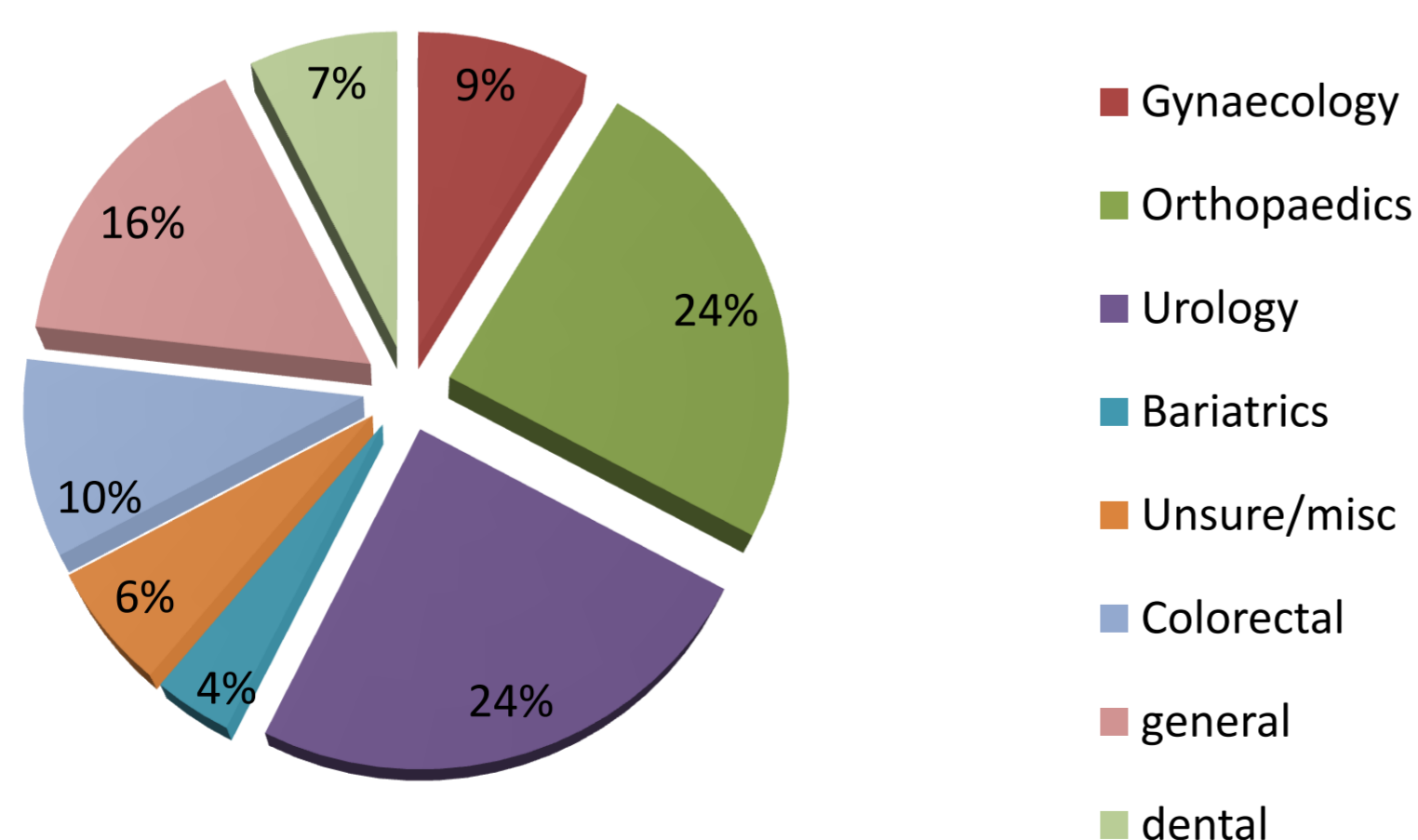
### RESULTS

#### Patients who HAVE had an anaesthetic before

Total: 112 Male: 65 (58%) Female: 47 (42%)

Speciality	Total No In each speciality group	Know the role of an anaesthetist ? YES	Does the anaesthetist stay throughout- YES?	Know when role ends? YES
Gynaecology	9	8	6	7
Orthopaedics	27	25	25	23
Urology	25	24	23	20
Bariatrics	3	3	3	3
Unsure/misc	11	9	10	8
Colorectal	10	10	9	10
General	20	18	16	16
Dental	7	6	6	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>103 (92%)</b>	<b>98 (87.5%)</b>	<b>92 (82%)</b>

Fig 1. Adequate Description about anaesthetists' role. 73% of patients gave an adequate description of the anaesthetists' role



#### Patients who HAVE NOT had an anaesthetic before

Total: 22 Male: 10 (45%) Female: 12 (55%)

Speciality	Total No in each group	Understand anaesthesia? YES	Know role of Anaesthetist? YES	What do they qualify as? No. who stated Doctors	Present during op? YES	Know when role ends? YES
Gynaecology	3	1	2	3	3	3
Urology	2	2	2	0 (technicians)	2	1
Dental	2	0	0	0	1	2
Colorectal	1	1	1	1	1	1
General	5	4	5	3	4	5
Orthopaedics	3	3	3	1	2	2
Bariatrics	1	1	1	1	1	1
ENT	4	4	4	1	4	4
Not specified	1	0	1	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>16 (72%)</b>	<b>19 (86%)</b>	<b>10 (45%)</b>	<b>18 (81%)</b>	<b>19 (86%)</b>

In the group of patients who had no prior anaesthetic experience only 50% of patients were able to give an adequate description of the role of the anaesthetist.

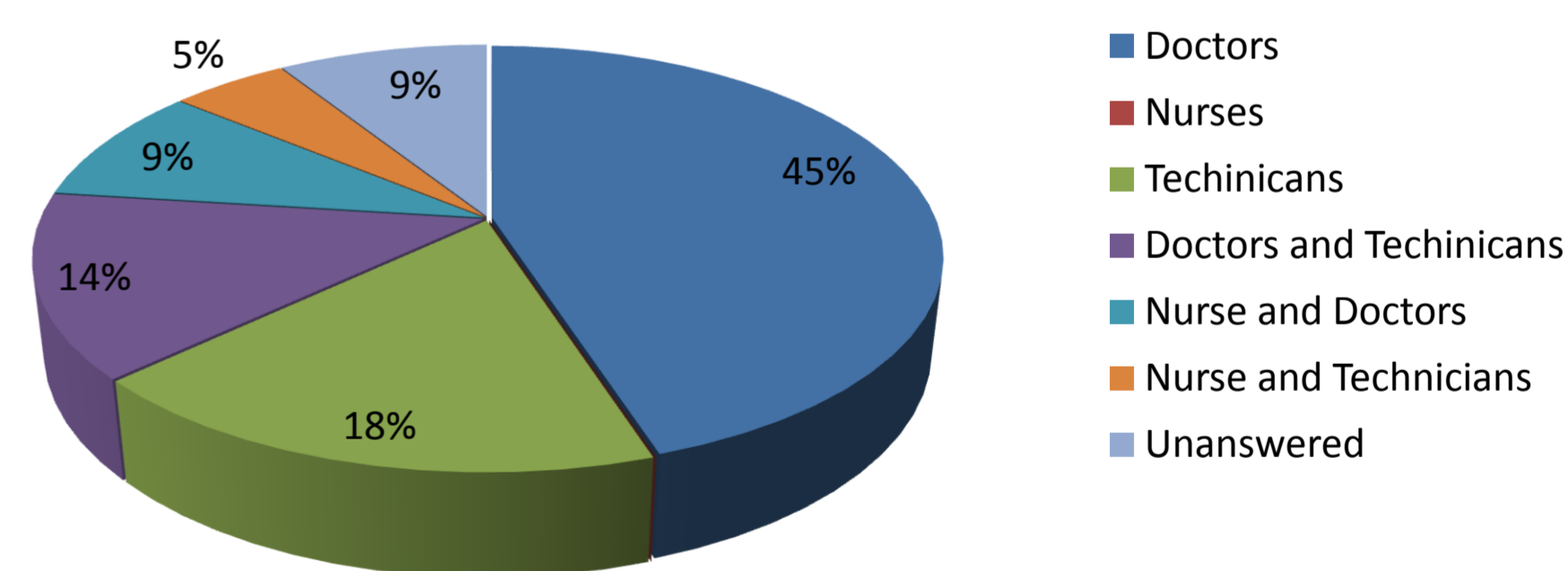


Fig 2. Patients' knowledge about anaesthetists' qualifications

### SUMMARY

❖ 55% of patients who had no prior experience of anaesthesia did not know that anaesthetists were doctors

❖ 20% of patients were unaware that anaesthetists have a role outside the operating theatre.

❖ However, 90% of patients across both groups were happy with the explanation given to them by their anaesthetist.

❖ The most common fears that patients expressed about anaesthesia were not waking up and post-operative pain.

❖ We conclude that further patient education is required about the role of the anaesthetists.

### References

1. Swinhoe CF, Groves ER. Patients' knowledge of anaesthetic practice and the role of anaesthetists. *Anaesthesia*, 1994 Feb; 49(2):165-6
2. Smith A, Mannion S. Irish Patient's knowledge and perception of anaesthesia. *Ir Med J.* 2013 Feb; 106(2):50-2
3. Chew ST, Tan T, Tan SS, Ip-Yam PC. A survey of patients' knowledge of anaesthesia and perioperative care. *Singapore Med J.* 1998 Sep; 39(9):399-402.