Anaesthesia records—international access

Editor—A 6-yr-old boy presented on an evening emergency list for manipulation of a forearm fracture. He was fit and healthy but his mother reported an ‘allergy to anaesthesia’. Two years previously, whilst living in Holland, he had required skin grafting for a burn and his mother reported that he had become wheezy with breathing difficulties in the anaesthetic room and she had been asked to leave. The on call SHO felt it prudent to defer the case to the following morning’s emergency list.

The cause of the previous anaesthetic problem was not clear from the mother’s description but she remained certain that it was an allergy. We contacted the GP who had no information about this episode as it had occurred while the family was resident abroad.

More with hope than expectation we telephoned the Burns Hospital in Beverwijk in The Netherlands. Both the switchboard operator and the anaesthetic secretary spoke excellent English and were very helpful. Within 2 h we received a faxed communication from one of the anaesthetic consultants detailing the episode of bronchospasm and decreased oxygen saturations, attributable to excessive bronchial secretions secondary to a pre-existing respiratory tract infection. We were able to reassure the mother and the patient had an uneventful anaesthetic and recovery.

We were highly impressed with the response to our request and were left wondering if we could have done as well had we been on the receiving end of such a request from Holland. We would like to thank our colleagues from the anaesthetic department in Beverwijk for their help.

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