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Saving the life of clinically unstable orthopedic patients through regional anesthesia

Quite often, we encounter patients where we are perplexed with regards to the type of anesthetic management which we are going to conduct considering the varied pre-existing co-morbidities the patient may have. It is during such instances when peripheral nerve block may be accomplished and where a neuraxial block or general anesthesia is contraindicated. According to the American Society of Regional Anesthesia (ASRA), Regional Anesthesia (RA) refers to the injection of the local anesthetic near a cluster of nerves to numb the area of the body that requires surgery. There are two major types of RA: The first is a neuraxial block which refers to both epidural or spinal anesthesia which is forms of anesthesia that can temporarily interrupt sensation from the trunk up to the legs through the injection of a local anesthetic in the vertebral canal which contains the spinal cord and spinal nerves. The second type of RA is the Peripheral Nerve Block (PNB), which is performed through an injection made near the nerves to numb the appropriate area of your body (e.g. the arm, leg) that requires surgery. PNB, as compared to neuraxial block, does not cause a drop-in blood pressure because of the absence of sympathetic blockade. Vasodilatation is limited only to a certain area. Although general anesthesia may obviate the concerns regarding the untoward sequelae that are associated with a neuraxial block, it has its own adverse effects. Considering these factors, PNB is the most appropriate technique for the medically compromised patient. Several case reports have been published attesting to the usefulness and effectiveness of PNB for lower extremity surgery in patients with an unstable hemodynamic status. In summary, PNB can result in a better outcome where general anesthesia and neuraxial block may further aggravate the medical condition of unstable patients.

Biography

Penafrancia C Cano is the Chief of the Section of Orthopedic Anesthesia and an Associate Professor in the Department of Anesthesiology at the University of the Philippines - Philippine General Hospital, which is the biggest state hospital in the country. She is also a Consultant of the Department of Anesthesiology at the Asian Hospital in Alabang, Philippines. She is presently the Chair of the Committee on Continuing Medical Education of the Philippine Society of Anesthesiology (PSA). She is very well recognized in the subspecialty of regional anesthesia where she has spearheaded and directed several conferences and workshops all over the country. She is a respected speaker both locally and internationally.

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