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ASA Grading in Obstetrics: too labourious to deliver?

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Introduction

The ASA - PS grading is an internationally recognised tool used to stratify the baseline status of sick patients.

The Society states that 'although pregnancy is not a disease, the parturient's physiologic state is significantly altered from when the woman is not pregnant.'

In 2014, the ASA - PS was amended with added examples and further updated in October 2019[1] and December 2020[2] subsequently with examples relevant to the parturient state.

We aimed to assess the knowledge and understanding of the latest ASA -PS grading amongst the team working in our maternity services.

Methods

Following approval from the Audit department, anaesthetists and obstetricians of all grades were approached to participate in the survey.

11 clinical scenarios included by the ASA - PS classification system were used for grading via a web based survey tool.

The assigned ASA Class were then analysed and the responses compared with the correct responses using the approved examples.

Results

- Of the 41 responses obtained, ASA grading was done correctly in 69.38%.
- Strikingly, 79% of participants failed to correctly gauge the severity of ASA grading for uterine rupture.
- Within each speciality, the incorrect responses were comparable and averaged 30.62%.
- A considerable variability existed between the correct responses within individual questions for both groups ranged from 4 to 26%.

Discussion

- This survey demonstrates significant limitations regarding the awareness of the updated ASA - PS grading within our maternity services.
- Attempts to highlight the importance of correct grading are ongoing via obsterics-specific laminated posters, formal teaching and multidisciplinary forums in our delivery suite.
- Appropriate ASA grading will aid as an important tool in helping improve the level of patient care and ensure appropriate management throughout the care pathway.

References

1.ASA Physical Status Classification System Developed By: ASA House of Delegates/Executive Committee Last Amended: October 23, 2019 (original approval: October 15, 2014)

2. ASA Physical Status Classification System Developed By: ASA House of Delegates/Executive Committee Last Amended: 16 December 2020 (original approval: October 15, 2014)

Outcome

ASA PHYSICAL STATUS CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM OBSTETRICS

Grade	Definition	Adult Examples, including, but not limited to:
ASA I	A normal healthy patient	
ASA II	A patient with mild systemic disease. Mild diseases only without substantive functional limitations.	Normal pregnancy Well controlled gestational HTN Controlled preeclampsia without severe features Diet-controlled gestational DM 30<BMI<40; Current smoker, social alcohol drinker Mild lung disease, Well controlled DM, HTN
ASA III	A patient with severe systemic disease. Substantive functional limitations; One or more moderate to severe diseases	Preeclampsia with severe features Gestational DM with complications or high insulin requirements A thrombophilic disease requiring anticoagulation. BMI ≥40 Alcohol abuse (> 7 units/week)
ASA IV	A patient with severe systemic disease that is a constant threat to life.	Preeclampsia with severe features complicated by HELLP or other adverse event, Peripartum cardiomyopathy with EF < 40 Uncorrected/decompensated heart disease - acquired or congenital. Sepsis, DIC
ASA V	A moribund patient who is not expected to survive without the operation.	Uterine rupture
ASA VI	A declared brain-dead patient whose organs are being removed for donor purposes.	

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The simplified obstetric-specific laminate depicting the ASA - PS Classification with examples