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**AN APPREHENSIVE CHILD: DEALING
WITH PERIOPERATIVE BEHAVIORAL STRESS:
WHEREIN LIES THE LACUNAE**

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In the present day, any child undergoing a surgical procedure under anesthesia has the right to comprehensive care which should include behavioral and psychological support, apart from routine physical care. Understanding and managing behavioral anxiety in children is still a challenge to anesthesiologists globally. It is every anesthesiologists dream to have a happy, calm and cooperative child in the operating room (OR) table before induction. Moreover, numerous studies have established that children succumbing to stress preoperatively undergo more associated neuroendocrine changes and increased hemodynamic alterations, both intraoperatively and postoperatively. Apprehension and fear in a child mainly stems from minor issues like parental separation, loss of control, misconceptions, uncertainty regarding surgery and anesthesia and its outcomes and the seemingly foreign, unfamiliar hospital environment. The main crux of the problem lies in the fact that each child is different with respect to age, cognitive development, developmental maturity, influence of environment, literacy level, language, understanding of illness and the procedures. Their past experience in the health setting, their moods, influence of parents, peers all contribute to their state of mind in the perioperative setting. Hence to address this issue, we first need an increased awareness and understanding of the psychological aspects of not only the child but its whole family per se, through proper psychosocial history taking and psychological assessments. However, the dilemma lies in the correct choice of interventions. Hence an attempt is made to look into the various interventions available to us and discuss its applicability and shortcomings in various settings of a developing world and strive for a methodical, honest, sensitive, age appropriate approach to handle perioperative anxiety in children.

References

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