

Unexpected airway difficulty continues to be a potential cause for significant morbidity and mortality for patients who receive procedures in the United States. Anesthetists and anesthesiologists are faced with this issue on a regular basis; the estimated prevalence of patients who have difficult airways varies from 0.1% to 10.1% depending on how difficult airway is defined (Rose DK, Cohen MM. 1996). Although many difficult airways can be identified using careful examination, unexpected difficulties still arise. Therefore, it is crucial for difficult airway knowledge to be shared among healthcare providers.

Our study will look at whether providing wallet cards containing the difficult airway information to patients improves the dissemination of difficult airway knowledge. A survey was administered to 172 patients whose University of Colorado Hospital (UCH) record indicates both presence of difficult airway and receipt of a wallet card and difficult airway letter. The survey asks patients several questions including 1) Their current understanding of their difficult airway 2) Their use of the wallet card and 3) whether they were enrolled in MedicAlert difficult airway registry. 60 patients responded, of which 45 (75%) recall receiving a wallet card in the mail. 41 patients who received a wallet card feel that they understand the information on it (91.1%) and 34 (75.5%) report carrying the wallet card with them. 27 (45%) of respondents had discussed their airway information with their primary care provider (PCP), of which 16 (59.3%) had shared their wallet card with their PCP. Only 2 (3.3%) of patients were registered for the MedicAlert difficult airway registry.

There is a large percentage of patients who remain unaware of their difficult airway status, and this poses a risk for similar complications arising during subsequent

airway procedures. We should emphasize the importance of sharing this information with their providers and encourage patients to participate in the MedicAlert registry.