Prevention of retained surgical items: Doobara count karo

As responsible healthcare professionals, we must remain vigilant about such preventable occurrences in routine medical practice.

New Delhi, March 05, 2017: Surgery is a complicated endeavor and requires an arsenal of surgical tools. Now and then we see surgeons charged with leaving a gauge in abdomen during surgery which is the most commonly reported retained item following surgery. While on the other hand, reports of retained needles and instruments are extremely rare. Invariably, the case ends up in the media trial.

The consequences of retained sponges and gauges include injury, repeated surgery, excess monetary cost and loss of hospital credibility. IMA policy and recommendation therefore, is to count again “before and after surgery”.

Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement said that “To err is human provided all precaution and guidelines are followed. A standard procedure is to open a tray with gauges. OT Nurse on duty counts the gauges before and after the surgery. The same is documented and a surgeon confirms the same. If this procedure is not followed and a gauge is left, it amounts to gross negligence. In some situations, even after taking full precautions, it is possible to make an error in counting the gauges. A nurse, with minimum cognitive impairment, may lose the track of counting, if she gets diverted during counting by someone.”

“Counting of items before and after use, at the time of surgery, is the most widely used method for the screening of RSI, but it is not foolproof. According to studies, these protocols are labor intensive and can occupy up to 14% of operative time. It therefore makes sense to ensure that this valuable time be a onetime investment with no margin for error. “Doobara count karo” is being advocated as a double check strategy and with this it is unlikely to make a mistake. The whole process may only take a couple of minutes extra.”, added Dr K K Aggarwal.
Recently, sponges tagged with radiofrequency identification (RFID) microchip and a handheld scanning device, have been devised to prevent RSI. By the time such medical advancements become the norm in routine medical practice, one must remember the approach of “Doobara Count karo”.

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4098594/

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About IMA: Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2,60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

For further information please contact:
Sanjeev Khanna - 9871079105
Md Adib Ahmad – 9873716235
Mediaimah2@gmail.com
IMA Public & Media Advocacy Cell