

In other hospitals where it is the custom to anæsthetise the patient in the theatre slightly kinder consideration is shown for his feelings by covering the various trays of instruments and solutions with sterilized towels before he enters the room. It is a question if this suggestive concealment is not just as harrowing to a mind, usually at that particular period if at no other, abnormally sensitive.

In many hospitals where the patient is anæsthetised in the theatre, or where he is wheeled into the theatre while but very slightly under the anæsthetic, I have noted that it is far from uncommon for the operator, his assistants and his guests, and perhaps the anæsthetist, to continue conversing or engage in discussions, or give accounts of interesting cases, all in an ordinary conversational tone, or even louder if the conversation is taking place from opposite sides of the theatre, when a very brief reflection should inform them that for at least several moments the remarks must, in many cases, be plainly heard, perhaps fully comprehended, by the patient.

Those of us who have visited European clinics are apt to return with a conviction of the lack of consideration for the feelings of the patient, shown in so many of the leading hospitals there, both in the out-patient and bed-side clinics and in the operating theatre. In the out-patient clinics it is no uncommon thing for patients, who are mostly of the very poor class, to be treated with an officious brusqueness, which amounts in some cases to absolute brutality, and which I know would not be tolerated in England or America. At European bed-side clinics, the large class of students and graduates will probably be told the hopeless prognosis of the case with blunt and calous frankness, and possibly be even informed of the hour of the morrow of which they can attend the post mortem, while the clinician gazes stoically at the patient listening with straining ears for some word of hope, or looking with dull hopeless eyes for that gentleness of manner and humanizing kindness which science cannot give and yet should not take away. While in European operating rooms it is not uncommon for the surgeon to acquaint the students in the crowded theatre with the various features of the case, and details of the operation about to be performed, while standing beside the table on which the patient is being anæsthetised.

In those hospitals where the anæsthetising room is practically an ante-room of the theatre, the above conditions are alleviated, but even here sounds from the adjoining theatre readily find entrance and must have a most disquieting effect on the patient, and must act as so much additional shock which, with the necessary shock of the anæsthetic, militates against the success of the operation.

The final preparation of the patient also is usually related to the administration of the anæsthetic.