

Journey of mat to mask, where OM meets O2: Harnessing mindfulness in perioperative care” A Perspective of the Anaesthesiologist

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Abstract

Holistic wellbeing and the philosophy of yoga and meditation offer a natural parallel to the practice of anaesthesiology, both aiming to guide the body and mind into a state of safe, restorative stillness. This perspective piece explores a “two-sided holistic correlation” in perioperative care: the inner terrain of the patient, whose chronic disease burden and psychological state shape anaesthetic risk and recovery, and the inner state of the anaesthesiologist, whose own clarity, empathy, and self-care shape vigilance and decision-making in the operating theatre. The author argues for a team-based approach in which mindfulness practices support both patients and perioperative staff, contributing to a calmer, safer operating theatre ecosystem and better outcomes for the healer and the healed alike.

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Perspective

The monsoon drapes the Swami Rama Himalayan University campus in its soft, shimmering veil and the entire valley seems to breathe differently—calmer, fuller, more alive. The rain-washed pathways, the mist curling around the Himalayan foothills, and the rhythmic patter on the lush green canopy create an atmosphere where nature itself feels meditative. Walking through this serene landscape, I often find my thoughts settling into a quiet clarity. It is in these monsoon-soaked moments that the connection between holistic health and anaesthesiology reveals itself most beautifully. Just as the rains cleanse, balance, and renew the environment, holistic wellbeing

nurtures the equilibrium that anaesthesiology depends upon—of body, mind, and inner harmony. This campus, especially in the monsoon, inspires me to see anaesthesiology not merely as a science of physiology, but as a practice deeply intertwined with the wholeness of human health.

Anaesthesiology mirrors the essence of meditation and yoga, where the mind is guided into a state of deep, restorative stillness. Just as meditation leads one gently into a space beyond conscious thought, and yogic practices cultivate a calm, balanced inner world, anaesthesiology too ushers the patient into a controlled state of profound sleep—one that is safe,

protected, and deeply healing. The philosophy of yoga describes pratyahara and nidra as states where sensory input withdraws and the mind rests in quietude; anaesthesia achieves a similar withdrawal, but through scientific precision and vigilant monitoring. This parallel reminds us that anaesthesiology is not merely a pharmacological event—it is a carefully orchestrated journey into deep rest, where the body surrenders and the mind is freed from awareness. Understanding this connection enriches our practice, allowing us to

approach anaesthesia with the same mindfulness, compassion, and holistic awareness that meditation and yoga inspire.

Holistic health has a surprisingly deep and practical correlation with anaesthesiology, and through the lens of an anaesthesiologist's daily realities—physiology, psychology, perioperative stress, and long-term patient outcomes—the connection becomes both scientific and intuitive.



Figure 1. Diverse and lively flowering trees. (Pics courtesy Mr. Anoop Rawat)

Holistic health reduces the burden of chronic non-communicable diseases of the patient like hypertension, diabetes, obesity, sleep apnoea, cardiovascular disease etc. which usually complicates

anaesthesia. A patient with fewer of these comorbidities is a patient with fewer perioperative surprises.

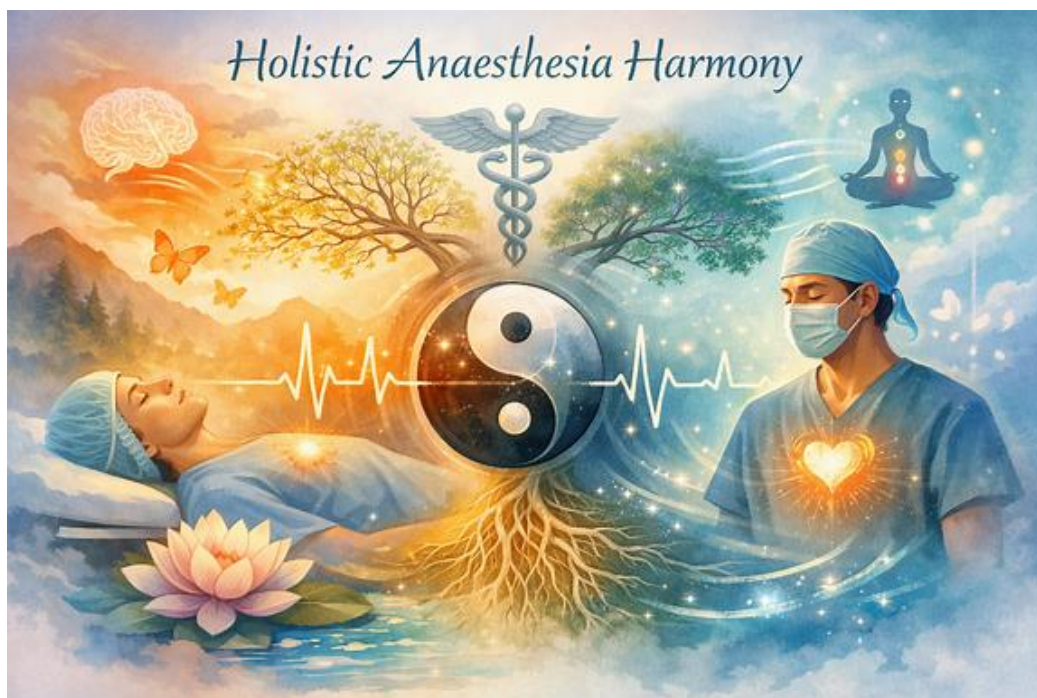


Figure 2. Holistic anaesthesia harmony

There exists the “Two-Sided Holistic Correlation in Anaesthesiology” – from the patient’s side, where the inner terrain matters, and from the anaesthesiologist’s side, where the inner state of the perioperative

physician matters too. The intersection of the two has a profound impact on the health outcomes of both the healer and the healed.



Figure 3. The two-sided holistic correlation in anaesthesiology



Figure 4. Holistic anaesthesia: patient and anaesthesiologist domains

Holistic health doesn't sit outside anaesthesia—it flows through it. It shapes the patient's physiology, psychology, recovery, and risk profile. It shapes the anaesthesiologist's clarity, empathy, and performance. And ultimately, it shapes the quality of perioperative care.

For patients, embracing simple yoga and meditation practices is more than a wellness trend — it is a gentle, accessible pathway to better health and safer surgical journeys, leading to long-term wellbeing and emotional balance. It needs awareness being generated by healthcare professionals and motivation for implementation by the patient himself/herself.

Just as flight safety briefings teach us to secure our

own oxygen mask before assisting others, yoga and meditation remind us that self-care is essential for the anaesthesiologist too. When healthcare professionals nurture their inner calm and clarity, they bring steadiness, empathy, and vigilant decision-making into the operating theatre. The need of the hour is a team-based approach — where both patients and the perioperative team embrace mindfulness, communication, and collective balance. When patients care for their lifestyle and the anaesthesiologist cares for their inner wellbeing, the entire OT ecosystem becomes safer, calmer, and more harmonious, leading to the best perioperative outcomes.

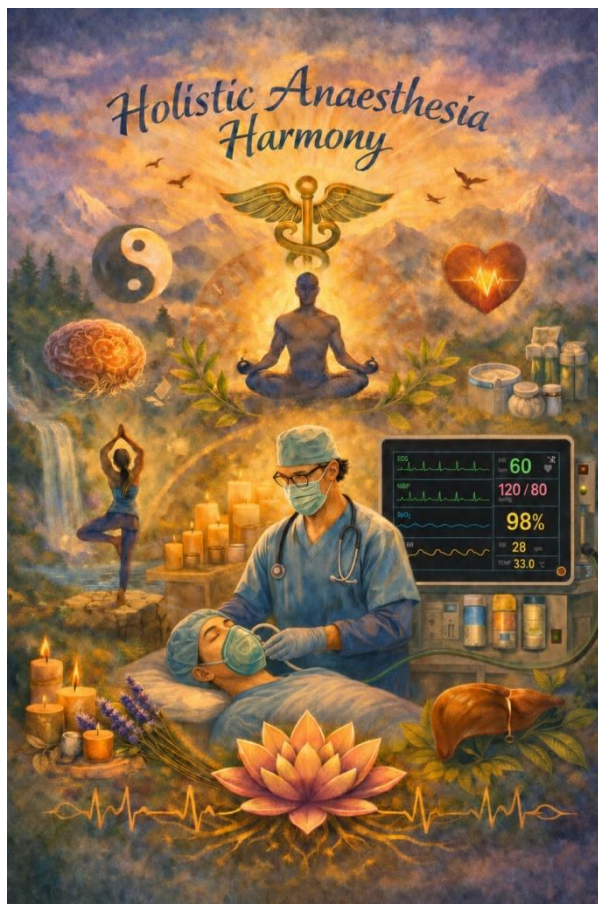


Figure 5. Concept of concentration-Holistic anesthesia harmony
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