

REVIEW OF CASES MEDICAL MISTAKES CONCERNING ACUTE AIRWAY OBSTRUCTION

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Introduction: There was observed in recent years in Poland an increased number of reports concerning alleged medical mistakes - it makes often and often the prosecutor and courts seek experts' opinion. Forming an opinion in the cases of alleged medical mistakes belongs to the most demanding tasks of forensic medicine specialists. Such a process has to follow established rules. One of them is that the opinion should be authored by teams of several experts properly prepared for the process. Medical mistakes allegations concern practically all medical specialties, especially those involving invasive procedures and dealing with acute states endangering human's life. Here belong especially anesthesiology and intensive care. **Material and Methods:** Medico-legal opinions in cases of alleged medical mistakes needing medical professional conduct assessment were analyzed by forensic medicine experts of the Medical University of Wrocław in 2002-2011. It allowed choosing cases of acute respiratory insufficiency caused by improper treatment of illnesses or indeed because of improper medical treatment itself. 3 cases of medical mistakes in depth analysis has been performed and the results were described in detail. **Results:** In one of analyzed cases the improper medical treatment object was a child with infection-related laryngitis, which resulted in increasing dyspnea. Although the matching symptoms were observed, the physicians taking care of the child failed to treat it properly - the child was eventually transferred to an Intensive Care Unit, where it passed away. The 2nd analyzed case comprised the multi-tooth extraction by a dentist assisted by an anesthesiologist. A subsequent massive bleeding caused the patient to choke with blood and suffocated to death because of the lack of proper airways patency securing during the procedure. In the 3rd case during a surgical procedure aiming at establishing control of overweight by putting a balloon into the patient's stomach, the anesthesiologist failed to properly secure the airways which caused acute respiratory insufficiency and death. **Conclusions:** Analysis of the medico-legal opinions formed by experts showed that medical mistakes resulting in patients' deaths happens also in medical disciplines strictly following algorithms. The most common medical mistakes concerned basic medical rules and resulted from disobeying the established and advised medical procedures. Among the causes of medical mistakes is the lack of imagination and efforts to foresee of performing or giving up performing the needed medical actions.