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Original Articles

Is Mindful Practice Our Ethical Responsibility as Anesthesiologists?

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Is Mindful Practice Our Ethical Responsibility as Anesthesiologists?

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■ Introduction

Every so often, and seemingly more often in today's world of social media and 24-hour news networks, a word takes root and flourishes to the point of evolving from a provocative concept to the passé, or worse yet, the ludicrous. Such a metamorphosis has begun in recent years with the word "mindfulness"; although it is encouraging to see attention being given to this important concept, to many its impact has mirrored that of a new song that you love, but grow to hate upon hearing it for the hundredth time. "Mindfulness" is everywhere, from the gym to the doctor's office, but has it lost its meaning in its ubiquity?

We will argue that mindful practice is the ethical responsibility of anesthesiologists. With personal, subjective, and somewhat nebulous concepts such as mindfulness, mindful practice, ethical duties, and professionalism, anything but a rigorous and logical approach would fall short. We will present an argument for mindful practice, drawing from nonanesthesia-related sources where appropriate, and applying to anesthesiologists when indicated.

"When we are mindful, deeply in touch with the present moment, our understanding of what is going on deepens, and we begin to be filled with acceptance, joy, peace, and love."

Thích Nhất Hạnh, Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk, author and peace activist.

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