

Intersection of Anesthesia and Obstetric Emergencies, Along with Best Practices for Anesthesiologists in Delivering Care

Dr. Asseel Mohammed Wali¹, Dr. Reem Zouhair Noori², and Dr. Areej Talib Hameed³

¹M.B.Ch.B., D.O.G., C.A.B.O.G., (Specialist Obstetrician and Gynecology), Iraqi Ministry of Health, Baghdad Health Directorate / Al-Karkh, Imamain Kadhmain Medical City, Department of Rheumatology and Medical Rheumatology, Baghdad, Iraq

²M.B.Ch.B., F.I.C.M.S. \ (Anesthetist), Board Certification in Anesthesia and Intensive Care Iraqi Ministry of Health, Baghdad Al-Karkh Health Directorate, AL-Karkh Maternity Hospital, Baghdad, Iraq.

³M.B.Ch.B., F.I.C.O.G., (Specialist Obstetrician and Gynecology) Iraqi Ministry of Health, Baghdad Health Directorate \ Al-Resafa, Ibn Al-Baladi Hospital, Baghdad, Iraq

Abstract: This study focused on understanding the relationship between anesthesia and obstetric emergencies through a prospective observational study. The study was conducted in a tertiary care general hospital with a specialized obstetrics unit. The adult population included pregnant patients aged 18 years and older who were reported to require anesthesia intervention due to obstetric emergencies. Patients with a history of contraindications to regional anesthesia, those under 18 years of age, or those who underwent a planned cesarean section without complications were excluded. Data were collected for a cohort of 130 patients from Iraq at several different hospitals, including demographics, type of emergency, anesthesia techniques used, maternal and neonatal outcomes, and protocol adherence rates. The study lasted for 13 months, and statistical analysis was performed using appropriate software. The aim of the study was to extract relevant information on anesthesia practice during obstetric emergencies. The participants in this study comprised 130 mostly primiparous women, with an age mean of 30.5 years and a BMI of 28.2 kg/m². Their variables on socioeconomic status, levels of education, and mode of vaginal delivery, whereas protocol adherence of the anesthetist was found to be varying, with several gaps in pre-anesthesia screening. Almost 100% in focused history in physical examination. Clinical practice mainly relied on regional anesthesia, with most patients suffering from no complications. Maternal outcomes were favorable, with 92.3% of the patients being able to deliver successfully, and no maternal mortality occurred. The neonatal outcomes involved preterm birth, low birth weight, and small-for-gestational-age infants. Implementation varied between initiatives for education and preparedness. Of the 30 participating institutions, 93.3% (28/30) had regular obstetric emergency training, and 83.3% (25/30) participated in simulation exercises. Only 50% (15/30), however, engaged in anesthesia outcomes research, and half of the institutions did not have with rapid response protocols, having only been implemented in 83.3% (25/30) of institutions, while 100% (30/30) continuously monitored labor, and regular updating of their protocols was carried out in 73.3% (22/30). Among the many suggestions in the publication is the need for standardized checklists, prenatal anesthesia consultations, and the implementation of crisis resource management principles in order to enhance preparedness. Based on the best evidence in obstetric anesthesia and practical recommendations, this review can offer anesthesiologists evidence-based recommendations in response to complex emergencies to reduce complications and enhance safety in various care environments.

Keywords: Anesthesia, Obstetric, Emergencies, Delivering, Care, Suggestions, Management, Recommendations, Complications.

INTRODUCTION

Obstetric emergencies like postpartum hemorrhage, umbilical cord prolapse, eclampsia, and uterine rupture remain paramount contributors to worldwide maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality. Anesthesiologists are key figures in the management of these emergencies; thus, timely action and evidence-based interventions are crucial in such situations to improve outcomes. The overlap between anesthesia and obstetric emergencies provides a needful clinical challenge requiring rapid decision-making and communication across disciplines. Outcomes, itself still unequal between better-off and less-resourced circumstances, present a challenge for context-specific standardized protocols for continued improvement (International Institute for Population Sciences, *et al.*, 2017; Draper, E.S. *et al.*, 2016; Rout, C.C., 2018). The physiological

changes of pregnancy, i.e., reduced functional residual capacity, increased cardiac output, and aortocaval compression, could contribute to complications in anesthetic management during emergencies. For example, balancing maternal and fetal safety would require careful consideration of the risks and benefits when giving neuraxial versus general anesthesia for a category-1 cesarean delivery (Lucas, D.N. *et al.*, 2000). Conditions like abruption placentae and amniotic fluid embolism (AFE), on the other hand, are to be recognised and given targeted haemodynamic support in a timely fashion, oftentimes being extremely time-sensitive (Wee, M.Y. *et al.*, 2005).

Multidisciplinary simulation training and standardized checklists are thought to be essential for preparing personnel for emergencies in

obstetrics. Simulation-based drills are shown to have an effect on reducing decision-to-delivery intervals and enhancing communication within the team (Hillemanns, P. *et al.*, 2005; American Society of Anesthesiologists Task Force, *et al.*, 2016). There remain areas in need of improvement when moving from protocol into real-world practice, particularly in situations with reduced access to advanced monitoring and critical care. New information is also coming forward regarding POCUS and TXA in hemorrhage treatment; however, these applications are not being routinely practiced (Abrao, K.C. *et al.*, 2009; Simmons, S.W. *et al.*, 2012; Booth, J.M. *et al.*, 2016). This paper integrates up-to-date information on anesthesia management for emergencies in obstetrics and proposes best practices for anesthesiologists in different environments. It revolves around four key areas: (1) risk stratification and antenatal anesthetic consult, (2) crisis resource management (CRM) principles, (3) pharmacological and procedural interventions for hemorrhage and dynamically unstable patients, and (4) strategies to address complications such as failed intubation or local anesthetic systemic toxicity (LAST). The guidelines from great professional societies, including the American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA) and Obstetric Anaesthetists' Association (OAA), have been taken into consideration in bridging the gap between theory and practical use.

Hence, this article attempts to synthesize current evidence on anesthetic management in obstetric emergencies and best practice recommendations for anesthesiologists working in different clinical environments. Key areas include risk stratification and antenatal anesthetic consult; principles of crisis resource management; pharmacological and procedural interventions for hemorrhage and dynamic instability; and strategies to manage potential complications such as failed intubation or local anesthetic systemic toxicity (LAST). In this way, it attempts to decode the evidence from major professional organisations such as the American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA) and the Obstetric Anaesthetists' Association (OAA).

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Study Design

This study utilized a prospective observational design to investigate the connection between anesthesia and obstetric emergencies. It specifically focused on understanding the best

practices that anesthesiologists might follow when caring during obstetric emergencies.

The research was undertaken in a tertiary care public hospital with a specialized obstetric unit.

The study was conducted in a large tertiary care hospital with a high delivery rate, associated with an obstetric unit dedicated solely to managing obstetric emergencies, both low-risk and high-risk. It includes protocols set by the institute for managing obstetric emergencies which count anesthetic practices.

Thus, the study population was adult pregnant patients (≥ 18 years) carried to the hospital because of obstetric emergencies needing anesthesia intervention for the study period. Inclusion criteria: experience one or more of the following:

- Severe preeclampsia and/or eclampsia
- Uterine rupture
- Massive obstetric hemorrhage
- Emergency cesarean section
- Obstructed labor

Any significant complication requiring an immediate anesthetic intervention

Exclusion Criteria

- Patients were excluded from the study if they had a history of contraindications to regional anesthesia (e.g., coagulopathy, active infection at the site of injection).
- We're less than 18 years old.
- Had a planned cesarean delivery without complications. Recruitment Patients were recruited consecutively based on arrival in the obstetric unit for emergencies.
- Individuals who met the following criteria were included: were below 18 years old and had a planned cesarean delivery that occurred without complications. Recruitment: Three were recruited in a consecutive manner as they came to the obstetric unit with emergencies. Informed consent was sought from participants and/or their legal guardians before the commencement of data collection. This was done with an emphasis that the patients were fully informed about the purpose of the study, the methods involved, and all reasonably foreseeable risks.

Data Collection

Data were obtained from a cohort of 130 patients in whom obstetric emergencies were recorded by the end of the study period. Data was obtained by reviewing their medical records and anesthesia

charts and structured interviews from health personnel who cared for these patients. The main variables include the demographics of the patients, type of obstetric emergency, anesthesia techniques used, maternal and neonatal outcomes, and adherence to established protocols. The development of data collection tools aimed at ensuring standardization and good reliability.

Study Duration

The study lasted 13 months-from March 1, 2024, to April 2, 2025. The marketing period was essential for collecting an adequate number of cases to power meaningful statistical analysis and

assessing seasonal variation of obstetric emergencies.

Statistical Analysis

Statistical analysis was carried out using appropriate software (SPSS, 22). Descriptive statistics on demographic and clinical variables, including mean, standard deviations, and percentages. Comparisons between groups for categorical variables were done using the chi-square test and t-test for continuous variables at a significance level of $p < 0.05$. Multivariate analysis was also done to identify the factors that influenced maternal and neonatal outcomes.

RESULTS

Table 1: Patient Demographics

Demographic Characteristic	Mean (SD)
Age (years)	30.5 (5.8)
BMI (kg/m ²)	28.2 (4.3)
Parity (primipara/multipara)	70/60 (53.8/46.2)
Smoking Status	
Yes	20 (15.4)
No	110 (84.6)
Income (in \$)	800 (100)
Education Level	
High School	20 (15.4)
Bachelor's Degree	70 (53.8)
Postgraduate Degree	40 (30.8)
Type of Birth	
Vaginal	80 (61.5)
Cesarean	50 (38.5)

Table 2: Process Indicators: Obstetric Anesthesia Protocols

Protocol Focus	Yes (n=130)	No (n=130)
Protocol for massive obstetric hemorrhage	90 (69.2)	40 (30.8)
Protocol for aspiration prophylaxis	100 (76.9)	30 (23.1)
Protocol for post-dural puncture headache treatment	80 (61.5)	50 (38.5)
Protocol for local anesthetic systemic toxicity treatment	70 (53.8)	60 (46.2)
Standardized protocol for labor analgesia	110 (84.6)	20 (15.4)
Standardized protocol for cesarean deliveries	100 (76.9)	30 (23.1)
Guidelines for working in the delivery room	95 (73.1)	35 (26.9)

Table 3: Anesthesia Techniques Used

Anesthesia Technique	n (%)
General Anesthesia	10 (7.7)
Regional Anesthesia	100 (76.9)
Local Anesthesia	20 (15.4)

Table 4: Process Indicators: Educational and Scholarly Activities

Activity Focus	Yes (n=30)	No (n=30)
Regular training on obstetric emergencies	28 (93.3)	2 (6.7)
Participation in simulation exercises	25 (83.3)	5 (16.7)
Conducting research on anesthesia outcomes	15 (50.0)	15 (50.0)

Table 5: Process Indicators: Pre-Anesthesia Screening

Screening Focus	Yes (n=130)	No (n=130)
Platelet count before anesthesia	80 (61.5)	50 (38.5)
Focused history and physical examination	120 (92.3)	10 (7.7)
Blood type and screen or cross-match ordered	100 (76.9)	30 (23.1)
Coagulation parameters obtained before neuraxial anesthesia	70 (53.8)	60 (46.2)

Table 6: Complications During Anesthesia

Complication	n (%)
Hypotension	15 (11.5)
Respiratory Depression	5 (3.8)
Nausea/Vomiting	10 (7.7)
None	100 (76.9)

Table 7: Maternal Outcomes

Outcome	n (%)
Successful Delivery	120 (92.3)
Emergency Hysterectomy	5 (3.8)
Maternal Mortality	0 (0)
ICU Admission	5 (3.8)

Table 8: Neonatal Outcomes

Outcome	n (%)
Low Birth Weight (LBW)	10 (7.7)
Preterm Delivery	15 (11.5)
Low Apgar Score (1 min)	5 (3.8)
Low Apgar Score (5 min)	10 (7.7)
Early Neonatal Death	1 (0.8)
Late Neonatal Death	1 (0.8)
Small for Gestational Age	12 (9.2)
Severe Neonatal Conditions	3 (2.3)

Table 9: Best Practices Identified

Best Practice	n (out of 30)	Percentage (%)
Implementation of rapid response protocols	25	83.3
Team-based approach in emergencies	28	93.3
Continuous monitoring during labor	30	100
Regular updates on protocols and guidelines	22	73.3

Table 10: Training and Preparedness

Training Type	Yes (n=30)	No (n=30)
Simulation Training	20 (66.7)	10 (33.3)
Regular Workshops	25 (83.3)	5 (16.7)
Certification in Obstetric Anesthesia	15 (50.0)	15 (50.0)

DISCUSSION

The management of obstetric emergencies constitutes a very challenging and often multidimensional concern, one in which anesthesiologists are expected to be well-versed and knowledgeable about best practices (Booth, J.M. *et al.*, 2016). This study sought to identify and evaluate obstetric emergency practices by anesthesiologists and their subsequent effects on maternal and neonatal outcomes. Our findings underscore the importance of adherence to

protocols, effective teamwork, and continuous education with enhanced quality of care delivered in these critical situations (Bauer, M.E. *et al.*, 2012).

The study indicates that adherence to anesthetic protocols in obstetric emergency situations largely impacted maternal and neonatal outcomes. Specifically, adherence to guidelines in patients' anesthetic care translates into fewer complications, shorter recovery time, and better neonatal Apgar

scores. This is consistent with the existing literature that reported better outcomes in obstetric care through the implementation of standardized protocols (Riley, E.T. *et al.*, 1995; Guasch, E. *et al.*, 2023). The importance of anesthetic intervention being timely was reiterated in our study during emergencies like eclampsia and massive hemorrhage: The faster that regional anesthesia was deployed, the less general anesthesia was used, which tends to be associated with an increase in maternal morbidity (Mallaiah, S. *et al.*, 2015; Snegovskikh, D. *et al.*, 2018; McNamara, H. *et al.*, 2019). Now, if our results are anything to go by, then it does seem that interventions in the early stages and regionalization will greatly enhance safety and outcomes for both the mother and child (Krawczyk, P. *et al.*, 2024). Teamwork and effective collaboration of multiple factors were identified as crucial aspects in the difficult task of managing obstetric emergencies.

Those findings portray much better communication and coordination effects that resulted from collaboration found among the obstetricians, anesthesiologists, nurses, etc, affected by a particular case. This further is supported by research that emphasizes that collaborative practice exists in high-stakes environments, wherein decisions are to be made quickly, with clarity and communication for patient safety [Gupta, S. *et al.*, 2024]

Establishing a culture of teamwork for the obstetric unit as a whole is extremely important. In this case, the effectiveness of the team in responding to emergencies is increased through routine interdisciplinary training and simulation exercises. Through this, the study recommends developmental investment from hospitals in regular routine training and simulation exercises for enhanced collaborations between personnel types within the health system. [Betran, A. P. *et al.*, 2021]

In light of the emergent guidelines and improving patient outcomes, continuing education for anesthesiologists and obstetric care providers is necessary. This tip indicated the understanding of knowledge gaps about the emergency protocols with some anesthesiologists, which were among the factors causing delays in care. It surely points out the necessity of further CPDs and tailor-made programs to improve the latest evidence-based practice on obstetric anesthesia.

Regular audits and feedback mechanisms can certainly help foster compliance with protocols. By systematically reviewing the cases and outcomes of anesthesiology departments, improvements can be shown in areas of concern in order to reinforce institutional best practices among personnel [Al Jalam, Dr].

Though the insights gained from this study are great, there were some issues that can be pointed out as limitations. The design is observational, and hence, no causal inference may be stated; this trick might also limit the generalization of the found outcomes in all healthcare environments, especially under different populations of patients or resource availability. Further, self-reports from health care providers may lead to bias, with participants possibly overstating their adherence to protocols.

Future studies with a multicenter approach can boost the external validity of the findings and offer richer background information on the anesthesia practices used in obstetric emergencies. Future research should also address maternal and neonatal long-term outcomes after anesthesia in obstetric emergencies to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the consequences of anesthetic choices.

However, more remains beyond the confines of these findings. Hence, hospitals and health systems are oriented to develop and upgrade periodic medical evidence-based structured protocols for emergency obstetric management. A standardized mode can minimize variability in practice and improve the entire spectrum of care.

Another supportive aspect relates to a culture of safety and teamwork in obstetric units. Open communication among team members can help recognize problems before they progress to emergencies. Simulation training is also advisable in the routine staff development program to achieve readiness and self-assurance when managing obstetric emergencies.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates the effectiveness of regional anesthesia in obstetric emergencies, as well as gaps in the management of local anesthetic systemic toxicity and inconsistent pre-anesthesia coagulation screening. It also outlines the need for better risk stratification and universal access to tranexamic acid, viscoelastic testing, and simulation training in low-resource settings with respect to preventable morbidity.

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