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Essential oil to promote inhalational induction in children

To the Editor:

None of the volatile anesthetic agents have pleasant odours. We evaluated the use of essential oil of sweet orange to obscure the odour of sevoflurane and make it pleasant to inhale. One hundred and twenty children ASA 1 or 2 of both sexes aged between five and 14 yr undergoing dental extraction participated in a randomised double blind trial.

A standard technique consisting of sevoflurane in 50% O₂ and N₂O was used. In 60 children, the breathing filter was impregnated with four drops of essential oil. After two breaths of gas mixture with sevoflurane 1% the child was asked to rate the odour of anesthetic vapour as pleasant, acceptable, unpleasant and horrid. Sevoflurane concentration was then rapidly increased to 8%. Before discharge the children were asked to grade the acceptability of induction and whether they would like a similar technique used again in future.

Smooth induction was achieved in 85% of children in the essential oil group and the grading of anesthetic vapour odour was more favourable in this group (72% vs 23%, $P < 0.05$) as was acceptability of induction ($P < 0.05$). Children in the essential oil group were more likely to prefer a similar anesthetic technique in future (82% vs 55%, $P < 0.05$).

We have also used essential oil with halothane induction with excellent results.

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