

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Improving the practice of airway management in Nigeria by education, training and communities of practice

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OBJECTIVES:

1. To advocate the importance of airway management in Nigeria
2. To create a common forum for all stake holders and healthcare professionals who practice airway management in Nigeria.
3. To contribute to the scientific advancement of airway management through education, research, provision of guidelines and dissemination of information related to airway management in Nigeria.

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THE NEED

Airway management is a key competency for anaesthesiologists and other professionals working in the operating room, intensive care unit and emergency room. In 1990, Caplan et al reported that 34% of anaesthesia-related claims were related to airway management.

There is a significant variation in resources and skills of healthcare providers in various countries, institutions, and even departments within institutions. Studies in Nigeria have shown that only few individuals have access to training with novel airway techniques (Nwasor et al, 2014). Moreover, availability of recommended airway equipment and organisation of airway education have been reported to be suboptimal (Adesiyan and Enohumah, 2016).

CHALLENGES

We identified the following areas for interventions:

- Training – there is a dearth of qualified medical educators for airway management, opportunities for training like workshops, courses and programs.
- Advanced airway management involves certain technical skills that require long periods of practice, so this should be considered in the design of the curriculum for the trainings.
- Equipment – advanced airway management and monitoring equipment are mostly unavailable or expensive. Also there is a rapid evolution of new airway management technology and skills as well as a lack of biomedical support.
- Lack of interest - practitioners, institutions and policy makers are not interested in sponsoring training of their staff and purchasing advanced airway equipment. This results in poor funding.
- Poor team dynamics and lack of departmental protocols. There are no airway leads to coordinate all

activities to improve airway management within the institutions and zones nationwide.

- No airway management guidelines have been specifically designed for resource poor centres.

ORGANISING STAKEHOLDERS-THE BIRTH OF AN AIRWAY SOCIETY

The society came into existence as Society for Airway Management, Nigeria in 2018 with 10 members. It was formally recognised as a chapter in November 2019 by SAM international at the World Airway Management meeting (WAMM) in Amsterdam, Netherlands. It was registered as the Society of Specialists of Airway management (SSAM) by the corporate affairs commission of Nigeria in February 2022.

The Society became fully functional in August of 2021 following the constitution of the current seven member Executive Committee under the stewardship of the Pioneer President. Our vision was to improve the practice of airway management in Nigeria through education, training, research and collaborations with all stakeholders.

We have taken giant strides in building a strong foundation for the society. In this short period, we have been able to conduct a number of webinars, workshops and courses in airway management across the country. We have been able to collaborate with other societies, donors and professionals to deliver airway management training. Donations of airway equipment across the different geopolitical zones to improve airway management in the country has also been one of our major achievements.

Our achievements include:

- Earned SAM International endorsement of our workshops and courses (2021) and development of SSAM website (December 2022).
- Impactful educational webinars delivered with speakers from Nigeria and diaspora.
- Collaborations with the Nigerian Society of Anaesthetists (NSA), The intensive and Critical care Society, Nigeria and Project Commission on Urgent Relief and Equipment (C.U.R.E)
- Organized a robust hybrid Airway Workshop in collaboration with the NSA, with speakers from Nigeria, UK and US (2021 pre-conference workshops of the NSA Scientific Conference, November 2021.
- Pre-conference airway workshop training as part of the 2022 Annual Scientific Conference of the Intensive and Critical Care Society of Nigeria (I-CCSN), July 2022, 2023 and 2024.
- Pre-conference airway workshop training as part of the 2022 Annual Scientific Conference of the Nigerian Society of Anaesthetists (NSA), November 2022 and 2023.
- Organized a three (3) weeks hybrid Airway Management Course for anaesthetists, emergency medical technicians, non-physicians, nurses, medical officers, consultant physicians and surgeons working in emergency and critical care units (25 participants) in January to February 2022.
- Basic airway management workshop at Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH) for all nurses and doctors in the gastroenterology unit and burns and trauma unit (2022)
- Zonal airway training workshops nationwide in collaboration with Project C.U.R.E from 18th of November to December 2022 and September 2023. These workshops were facilitated by our Airway leads and other members in 5 cities so that participants could attend in the nearest city to them. Over 1000 participants have attended these workshops nationwide. All equipment and mannequins were donated by Project C.U.R.E.
- Collaborations with donor agencies to coordinate the distribution of free airway equipment to our members and institutions all across Nigeria. These include bougies, Air-Q, oropharyngeal airways, airway mannequins and video laryngoscopes for some selected sixty-five (65) tertiary public hospitals. Over 1000 airway carts have been distributed with other training devices.
- Collaborations with airway equipment manufacturers to make airway equipment readily available at reduced and affordable rates.
- Creation of a platform for research in airway management for SSAM members interested in research. Papers have been presented at conferences. SSAM currently has a membership of 300 on the WhatsApp platform.
- Establishment of over 40 simulation centres for airway management in collaboration with the Airway Development Incorporated across the nation with at least 5 in each geopolitical zone. These simulation centres are in medical schools, government and tertiary private institutions. They are manned by airway leads who are members of SSAM. These centres have been training medical students, student nurses and all healthcare professionals in airway management.
- Successful coordination of two hybrid Scientific Conferences and Annual General meetings in 2023 and 2024. These involved airway workshops and scientific sessions for over 150 healthcare professionals as delegates at each conference.

THE FUTURE

These achievements are indeed giant milestones in the trajectory of SSAM Nigeria. The journey has been both challenging and rewarding. SSAM, Nigeria will continue to advocate for ensuring that all aspects of airway management at both the zonal and national levels are addressed appropriately. SSAM will ensure the provision of evidence based, internationally endorsed training and all required equipment to help its members deliver proper airway management to all patients in Nigeria irrespective of their location. Nigeria, the most populous African nation (220 million) is situated in sub Saharan Africa so the success of SSAM Nigeria can be a model and platform for the establishment of airway societies in the sub region and other parts of Africa.

The focus for the society is now on providing local guidelines for the practice of airway management in the country by engaging practitioners, relevant societies, institutions and regulatory bodies to aid

patient safety and improvement in healthcare delivery especially in anaesthesia, critical and emergency care.

We are very grateful to all donors and sister societies for the support and contributions as members of the community of practice of airway management in Nigeria. We look forward to a more vibrant SSAM by collaborations with regional and international airway societies as well as greater participation and commitment of our members. We welcome innovative ideas for the progress of the society and improving the safe practice of airway management in Nigeria.

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