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PERCEPTION OF TATTOOS AMONG PHYSICIANS: THE EXAMPLE OF ANESTHESIOLOGISTS, TATTOOS AND EPIDURAL ANALGESIA

Nicolas Kluger¹, Jean-Christian Sleth².

¹*Departments of Dermatology, Allergology and Venereology, Institute of Clinical Medicine, University; (Helsinki, Finland);* ²*Service d'anesthésie-réanimation, Polyclinique Saint-Roch; (Montpellier, France).*

Aim: Tattoos are associated with negative perception and attitudes by non-tattooed individuals, including health care providers. We investigated whether anesthesiologist's perception of tattooing would interfere in performing an epidural analgesia (EA) through a lumbar tattoo of a parturient.

Methods: A prospective anonymous survey was sent to anaesthesiologists' including a clinical case scenario with a woman with a tattoo of the back covering totally the EA area. Questionnaire included whether they would perform an EA through the tattoo and their personal opinion regarding tattoos.

Results: 54 anesthesiologists (38 males, 16 females, mean age 47,6) completed the survey. 31 (57%) would perform an EA through the tattoo and 21 (39%) would not. Female anesthesiologists performed less EA in tattooed parturient women than male anesthesiologists ($p = 0,030$). Negative opinion towards tattoos was statistically associated with female gender ($p < 0.05$). We found a statistical difference ($p = 0,024$) between anesthesiologists who had positive opinion on tattoos and those who had negative opinion, as regards perform-ing an EA through a lumbar tattoo.

Conclusion: Having a positive or a negative opinion was related to the performance or no of an EA through a lumbar tattoo. Female anesthesiologists did have more often a negative opinion of tattoos compared to male colleagues and refused more often to perform EA to a parturient with lumbar tattoo. Personal perceptions of tattoos may influence directly the decision taking as regards performing EA among anesthesiologists. Our results need to be supported by larger series but raise the question to which extent tattoos influence the physician's perception and management of the patient.