



Preface  
The Upper Airway



Martin S. Bogetz, MD  
*Guest Editor*

After 20 years in academic anesthesia, I continue to be challenged and humbled by the life-sustaining and life-threatening nature of airway management. These tests of our judgment and skill become the “war” stories we tell at grand rounds and in the anesthesia lounge. Thankfully, the end is often a dramatic and satisfying success. Nevertheless, my most horrifying moments involve the point at which the tone from the oximeter drops to a sickening pitch and then becomes agonizingly slow. All eyes are on you.

The upper airway is the focal point for most airway problems. To give it the respect it deserves, one must understand its anatomy and physiology and appreciate all that can go wrong. Despite being crucial to life, it is affected by the same etiologies as all disease. Congenital problems plague the newborn and infant. Infection and inflammation can progress slowly until obstruction becomes life-threatening. Benign and malignant tumors often behave in a similar manner. Degenerative changes can affect the control of breathing and airway integrity to the point that even sleep becomes a threat. Traumatic injury, be it blunt or sharp, is sudden and often severe. Even one’s food can become a lethal weapon. Finally, our attempts to treat or cure disease can compromise the airway. Drugs that we administer masterfully and surgical procedures that are performed skillfully also can compromise the airway.

Internationally recognized experts have contributed to this issue of the *Anesthesiology Clinics of North America* dedicated to the upper airway. The issue is divided into two groups of articles. In the first section, Drs. Richard Isaacs and Jonathan Sykes discuss normal airway anatomy and physiology. Dr. Andrew Infosino introduces the unique aspects of the pediatric airway and

associated congenital anomalies. Diseases of the upper airway are discussed by Drs. D. John Doyle and Ramiro Arrellano, followed by Dr. Jonathan Benumof's extensive review of sleep apnea.

The second section provides comprehensive information about and insight into managing the upper airway. Dr. Elizabeth Cordes Behringer presents ways to think about and approach airway management issues. The often-neglected nuances of the facemask and nasal and oral airways are discussed by Dr. Robert S. Greenberg. Difficult airway management with the laryngeal mask airway is presented by the guest editor, followed by a detailed review of the newest laryngeal mask, the ProSeal, by Drs. Joseph Brimacombe and Christian Keller. Drs. Gaitini, Vaida, and Agro give an extensive review of the Combitube, followed by Dr. Carin Hagberg's discussion of special devices and techniques. Fiberoptic techniques are presented in a very practical way by Dr. Robin Stackhouse. The section finishes with Drs. Kwok Loh and Jonathan Irish discussing complications of tracheal intubation and upper airway management.

It is said that "judgment comes from experience, but experience comes from bad judgment." This international group of experts writes to give you the benefit of both their experience and judgment. I trust you will find this issue as informative, practical, and useful as I have.

Martin S. Bogetz, MD  
*Department of Anesthesia and Perioperative Care*  
*University of California–San Francisco*  
*San Francisco, CA, USA*  
*E-mail address: bogetzm@anesthesia.ucsf.edu*