

Subcutaneous Emphysema and Pneumomediastinum after Endotracheal Anaesthesia

C L Chiu,**FRCA*, G S Y Ong,***FANZCA*

Abstract

Introduction: We report a case of subcutaneous emphysema and pneumomediastinum that presented postoperatively after tracheal extubation. **Clinical Picture:** A 51-year-old man had an uneventful anaesthesia lasting about 6.5 hours. Intubation was performed by a very junior medical officer and was considered difficult. He developed sore throat, chest pain, numbness of both hands and palpable crepitus around the neck postoperatively. Chest X-ray revealed diffuse subcutaneous emphysema, pneumomediastinum and possible pneumopericardium. **Treatment:** He was treated conservatively with bed rest, oxygen, analgesia, antibiotic prophylaxis, reassurance and close monitoring. **Outcome:** The patient made an uneventful recovery. **Conclusions:** We discussed the possible causes.

Ann Acad Med Singapore 2000; 29:256-8

Key words: Anaesthetic technique, Complications, Pneumomediastinum, Subcutaneous emphysema, Tracheal intubation

* Lecturer

** Professor and Head of Department

Department of Anaesthesia

Faculty of Medicine

University of Malaya, Malaysia

Address for Reprints: Dr C L Chiu, Department of Anaesthesia, Faculty of Medicine, University of Malaya, Lembah Pantai, Kuala Lumpur 59100, Malaysia.