

Study of the deaths associated with anesthesia and surgery: based on a study of 599, 548 anesthetics in ten institutions 1948-1952, inclusive.

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BEECHER HK, TODD DP. A study of the deaths associated with anesthesia and surgery: based on a study of 599, 548 anesthetics in ten institutions 1948-1952, inclusive. Ann Surg. 1954;140(1):2-35.

<https://psnet.ahrq.gov/issue/study-deaths-associated-anesthesia-and-surgery-based-study-599-548-anesthetics-ten>

Published in 1954, this article examines the death rate attributable to anesthesia in the surgical services at 10 university hospitals. The researchers retrospectively reviewed 7977 deaths in 599,548 patients from 1948 to 1952 and determined the primary cause of death in each case. The authors state that a patient admitted to a surgical service has a 1 in 75 chance of dying from one cause or another, and a 1 in 95 chance of dying from his or her underlying disease. There was one anesthesia death for every 1,560 patients, a death rate of 0.06%. The researchers state that, in 1952, there were 2.4 times as many deaths from anesthesia as from poliomyelitis, and anesthesia should be viewed as a major public health problem.