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## HOLISTIC APPROACH TO RESUSCITATION: THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY PRESENCE

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### Background:

Resuscitation is an event that most healthcare providers (HCPs) find extremely challenging. The resuscitation team deals not only with the patient but also the family members.

### Case:

A 20 month old baby boy was brought to the emergency department (ED) by his father in a collapsed state, after he was noted to be choking. The child was taken immediately to the resuscitation zone while his father was asked to wait in the 'Family Room'. Despite resuscitation efforts, the child succumbed.

### Discussion:

Family presence during resuscitation is not a well practiced phenomenon due to fear of psychological trauma to the family, distraction and performance anxiety among HCPs, as well as medico legal issues. Foote Hospital, Michigan, USA, initiated a change in this customary policy. Family members were given the option of being involved in the resuscitation effort, not just as a spectator but as participants. They were encouraged to talk to the patient, informing of their presence and to say farewell. Their presence places the patient in a social network and deeply alters the resuscitation experience for HCPs. Many argue that patients may feel their confidentiality was compromised or that they may want to be remembered as they were and not their last dying moments. An interview with patients who survived resuscitation revealed that they felt content and supported by family presence and none felt their confidentiality or dignity was compromised. Should the resuscitation effort end negatively, many fear the psychological trauma to the surviving family members. However, family members do not share this concern as it provides the opportunity for closure.

### Conclusion:

Holistic approach to resuscitation requires a holistic health delivery system, beyond advanced life support. Clear policies on family presence during resuscitation should be in place as this will profoundly influence the experience and healing process of the affected family members, as well as HCPs.

### Keywords:

resuscitation, family presence, holistic approach