

The HIV Airway

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South Africa now has an estimated 5.3 million adults and children living with HIV/AIDS. Annual national antenatal surveillance shows an HIV prevalence of 26.5% among pregnant women.

Anaesthetists are confronted with an increasing number of HIV infected patients, presenting for both emergency and elective surgery. They range from having asymptomatic infection to end stage AIDS.

Airway problems are frequent. They can present in a variety of ways, from an airway related emergency to an incidental finding at laryngoscopy.

Some airway pathology is almost exclusive to this group of patients. This includes Kaposi's sarcoma and opportunistic infections by *aspergilla* and *candida albicans*, all of which have

been reported to result in airway obstruction.

Conditions not limited to immunocompromised states such as epiglottitis, retropharyngeal abscesses, mediastinal masses and Ludwig's angina are seen, with increased severity, in HIV infected individuals.

Knowledge of a patient's HIV status may alert one to potential airway problems. This review addresses some of the incriminating lesions and suggests possible management strategies

References

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