

ABSTRACT**POST OPERATIVE RECALL OF
VISUAL STIMULI
FOLLOWING
GENERAL ANAESTHESIA****GLORIA ALTHEA GLENDA VENTOUR-DERIGGS**

This study was designed primarily to investigate the effects of general anaesthesia on postoperative recall of visual stimuli presented immediately before induction of anaesthesia. Drugs and anaesthetic techniques used commonly at the U.H.W.I, were also assessed and the percentage of patients within each surgical subspeciality for whom general anaesthesia was required, was estimated. A total of 400 patients, 314 females and 86 males, aged 18 to 80 years, participated in the study.

200 patients were shown 3 picture postcards in sequence immediately prior to induction of general anaesthesia. They were tested for recall of the pictures 12 to 24 hours following termination of anaesthesia. The other 200 patients who were used as controls were not anaesthetized. They were presented with the picture postcards and tested for recall following an interval of

12 to 24 hours.

Patients who had been anaesthetized demonstrated significantly less recall of the pictures than those in the control group. Females scored higher in the recall tests than males. Patients who were older than 50 years had lower recall scores. These results indicate that general anaesthesia appears to disrupt memory mechanisms. This is important to anaesthetic and surgical staff. They need to be aware that information given to patients in the immediate perioperative period might not be adequately recalled; therefore important information relevant to the well-being of patients requiring general anaesthesia for operative procedures, should be given to patients well in advance of their arrival at the operating room, or, following full recovery from the effects of anaesthetic agents.