TTH celebrates National Anaesthesia Day

15 October 2014

The Townsville Hospital will celebrate National Anaesthesia Day tomorrow, Thursday, 16 October, commemorating 168 years since Boston dentist Dr William T Morton publicly used ether to painlessly extract a patient's bothersome tooth.

TTH anaesthetic consultant Dr Gavin Jones said the anxiety some people feel before surgery today would pale in comparison to the pain and fear associated with operations more than 150 years ago.

"Before Dr Morton operations required patients to be held down wide awake," Dr Jones said.

“ Thankfully, research and development have meant surgery has changed dramatically and Australian anaesthetics are among the safest in the world.”

Dr Jones said anaesthetists not only kept patients asleep and not moving during surgery, but also kept them pain free for the operation so surgeons could safely perform their work.

"During surgery anaesthetists are continually with the patient and are responsible for the care of the heart, lungs and other body systems while the operation is underway," he said.

"The science of giving of an anaesthetic is tailored to the individual needs of the patient, surgeon and operation; it is very complex and becoming an anaesthetist requires more than 10 years of intense study."

Dr Jones said that while anaesthetic medicine had come a long way, there were opportunities for patients to help themselves recover quicker after surgery.

“The theme of this year’s National Anaesthesia Day is Stop smoking before your anaesthetic – every day makes a difference,” he said.

“Anaesthetists have a unique opportunity to help encourage patients to stop smoking.

“Research shows that smoking makes your recovery from surgery more difficult; however, if you stop smoking for even a short time before you have an operation it will significantly reduce the risk of problems during and after your surgery.

“Stopping smoking can mean fewer complications with your anaesthetic and the operation itself.

“The chance of wound infection is decreased and you may spend less time in hospital, enjoy a faster recovery and your future health will benefit.”

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