



**FLORIDA
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Anesthesiologists Urge the Return of Patient Safety Standards for Floridians

(Tallahassee, Florida) - A new report from the Florida Board of Medicine (BOM) has prompted anesthesiologists to call for the re-establishment of strict patient safety standards.

The latest statistics from the BOM, a part of the state Department of Health, show that there have been an average of seven office surgery deaths in the state since the year 2000. Of the 35 deaths, 16 were from plastic or cosmetic surgery, and five were related to an elective procedure commonly known as a tummy tuck, which meant an INCREASE of more than 1.6 in the number of deaths for every 10,000 tummy tuck procedures, from 3.3 deaths to 4.9.

"This increase is simply unacceptable," states Dale Wickstrom-Hill, DO, the new President of the Florida Society of Anesthesiologists (FSA). "Once our state lawmakers are aware of these new statistics, we hope they will act quickly to restore the high standards for office safety set by our Board of Medicine."

FSA, in its annual meeting in West Palm Beach, urged its members to pursue legislative and regulatory changes for medical care during surgery in a doctor's office, where a patient has a ten times greater chance of dying than in a hospital.

In 2002 the BOM established the office surgery rule, requiring the presence of an anesthesiologist during general anesthesia in a doctor's office, to ensure that a highly trained professional is there, just as in the hospital. Exceptions were allowed, but only if the surgeon could prove competency during the administration of anesthesia.

But in 2004, the Florida Court of Appeals struck down the rule, saying that the BOM exceeded its authority when establishing the safety guidelines.

"The facts show that the office surgery rule saved lives," says Hector Vila, MD, Service Chief of Anesthesiology at H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa, Florida. "And the new statistics clearly show the public is in more danger today than it was before the rule was struck down."

A recent article in the Wall Street Journal singled out anesthesiologists as the medical specialty model for lowering malpractice insurance premiums because of their high patient safety standards.

The mission of the Florida Society of Anesthesiologists is to uphold the highest standards of care, patient advocacy, research, education and innovation in anesthesia. For a list of questions patients should ask their surgical care team before surgery, visit www.fsa-hq.org.

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