Be prepared for your career-defining medical emergency

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— John Bovia, co-founder of Life Support Services

The American Heart Association (AHA) estimates that 72 percent of all annual adult coronary heart disease deaths in the U.S. are due to sudden cardiac arrest, suffered outside the hospital setting. Yet the standard Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) course is geared towards the hospital setting.

As a dentist, what do you do when you don’t have a crash cart on hand or a 14 person response team to rush to the aid of the victim? What do you do when you must work ACLS algorithms without conventional pathways to support the administration of lifesaving drugs?

The average ACLS class will teach you the basics of Advanced Cardiac Life Support but it often fails to provide non-emergency professionals, like dentists, with the skills and tools to realistically save a life in a non-emergency setting, such as a dental office. As a result, profession-specific ACLS courses have begun to emerge, filling in the holes that standard ACLS courses leave open.

Most general dentists still do not use IV access as a common part of their practices. Therefore it is imperative to teach alternative ways of administering medications.

“One of the things we do at the DOCS ACLS course is teach how to give medications emergently without an IV,” says John Bovia, co-founder of Life Support Services and the ACLS Director for the Dental Organization for Conscious Sedation (DOCS). “And we can do that with techniques that are acknowledged by the AHA but are rarely emphasized in a hospital course.”

Alternative routes of administration can include transtracheal, intraosseous, and sublingual injections.

These additional methods have high success rates but are not favored in hospital settings and therefore not commonly taught. This leaves large gaps for viable treatment options for a non-IV trained dentist attending a standard ACLS course. Being able to successfully administer life-saving drugs outside of an IV can mean the difference between life and death for a dental patient.

Additionally, hospital-oriented ACLS courses cater to the demands of first responders and emergency workers which often work in large teams.

Bovia strongly believes in targeted ACLS training for the specific needs of the dental professional.

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