# 2018, Q3

MEDICAL ETHICS

TIMING 🕐 30m

## MODERN HEALTHCARE + MEDICAL ERRORS

In the age of modern healthcare, every time a patient dies after a routine operation or procedure, it's a case of medical error.

Explain the reasoning behind this statement. Argue that there can be reasons other than medical error behind such deaths. To what extent do you agree with the statement?

# ESSAY PLAN

**BMAT ESSAY**

**HEALTHCARE + MEDICAL ERRORS**

**2018**

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## EXPLAIN WHAT IS MEANT BY THIS STATEMENT

- The statement is suggesting that since medicine has advanced so much, a patient should be able to have a procedure and come out alive with no side effects and if someone does die after a procedure than it is down to the fault of the clinician

- Patients should feel confident that in a time like this they can have a routine operation and as long as there is no medical error they will be fine

- Statement suggests that medical error is the sole factor which leads to deaths in operations and procedures

- This would not have bene the case hundreds of years ago when healthcare was not this advanced and we had not done the procedure millions of times

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## THERE CAN BE OTHER REASONS BEHIND DEATHS

- **Age:** Older patients have the highest postoperative mortality and morbidity rates. This is because their organs do not work as well due to reduced functional capacity. This is taken into consideration when deciding whether or not to operate but is not something that is down to medical error

- **Past Medical History:** Patients who have pre-existing diseases are more likely to die for the same reason e.g. prexisting hypertension or ischaemic heart disease could lead to a myocardial infarction in the theatre - cardiac arrest is reversible in 90% of cases but when it is not it cannot be due to medical error. We use the The American Society of Anaesthesiologists (ASA) grading is to assess the risk involved

- **Reaction to anaesthetic:** Taking a thorough medical history allows us to account for any allergies that a patient might have but if they have not been exposed to anaesthetic it could be something that cna't be prevented and not down to medical error

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## TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE?

- We should be able to cater for a large proportion of cases where life is risked. Many causes can easily be avoided. For example patients who die of blood clots could have been put on blood thinners, patients who die of infection could have been put on antibiotics etc.

- Modern healthcare could be referring to Western developed world where we can cater for many of these but there are certain things out of our control

- Patients should be fully informed about a procedure and the risks involved

- Nothing in medicine can be 100% - We cannot guarantee 100% that any procedure even something elective and low-risk such as cataracts will not lead to death

- Statement is form of extreme language - 'every time'. People can die for other reasons too e.g. if they get run over