

**SURGICAL  
DERMATOLOGY**

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**ADVANCES IN CURRENT PRACTICE**

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## SEDATION FOR DERMATOLOGIC SURGERY

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Dermatologic surgery has recently grown tremendously in both the scope and complexity of its procedures. During surgery, the choice of sedation for adequate patient comfort is crucial. The most frequently used agents and coagents, their pharmacology, drug interactions, benefits and problems, as well as the equipment involved in sedating and monitoring dermatologic surgery patients, will be discussed.

### DEFINITIONS

Before discussing dermatologic surgical sedation, some definitions are in order:

1. General anesthesia: a recent California legislative statute defines general anesthesia as 'a controlled state of depressed consciousness or unconsciousness, accompanied by partial or complete loss of protective reflexes ...'.<sup>1</sup> However, a simpler and equally appropriate definition is, 'a state of unconsciousness ... with absence of pain over the entire body and a ... degree of muscular relaxation'.<sup>2</sup>
2. Analgesia: absence of sensibility to pain; designating particularly the relief of pain without loss of consciousness.<sup>2</sup>

3. Conscious: capable of an appropriate response to command with protective reflexes intact, including the ability to maintain an airway.<sup>3</sup>

4. Sedation: the pharmacologic induction of an elevated anxiety threshold without loss of consciousness.<sup>3</sup>  
'Conscious' sedation is a state of sedation in which the conscious patient is rendered free of fear, apprehension and anxiety through the use of pharmacologic agents.<sup>2</sup>

Since sedation in the above definition implies consciousness, it appears that the term 'conscious sedation' is redundant. It is probably more appropriate to use the terms 'sedation' or 'pharmacosedation'.<sup>3</sup> In general, use of sedation in the field of dermatology is reserved for surgical purposes. Therefore, the term 'surgical sedation' is used in this chapter.

### SURGICAL SEDATIVES

Guedel's four generally accepted stages of general anesthesia are: I, analgesia; II, delirium; III, surgical anesthesia; IV, medullary depression. Stage I ends with loss of consciousness.<sup>4</sup> Physicians wishing to perform surgical sedation would like