

Assignment Scenario:

Mrs Maria Sanchez is a forty year old Mexican lady is admitted via the Accident and Emergency department following an episode of acute abdominal pain. She is booked onto the emergency theatre list for a Laparoscopy ?ectopic pregnancy under general anaesthetic.

Mrs Sanchez arrives in theatre at 1930h with an interpreter. Following induction of anaesthetic the gynaecological registrar commences a Laparoscopy. It's not long before the surgeon becomes a bit tense and starts asking Wayne, the scrubbed practitioner for additional instruments. Wayne sends his circulating practitioner for more instruments and asks the surgeon what she intends to do. The surgeon brings the camera into focus and shows Wayne and the anaesthetist a large mass embedded into Maria's uterus. The surgeon says she is convinced that this is cancer and that Mrs. Sanchez should have the mass removed as soon as possible. Wayne asks if he can check the consent form.

Wayne tactfully suggests to the surgeon that it may be best to involve the Consultant before proceeding with the procedure and instructs his circulating practitioner to page the obstetrics and gynaecology consultant on call.

The consultant calls a few minutes later and the surgeon discusses the case briefly with him on the telephone. When the call is over the surgeon asks who Maria's next of kin is in order that she may discuss the options. A further call to the ward reveals that Maria's husband Miguel is in the hospital and he is coming to theatre to meet the surgeon. When the surgeon returns to theatre she explains that Miguel is also Mexican but speaks a little English and she has tried to explain the situation. Miguel is very upset and concerned and just keeps repeating "Do what you have to do!"

Surgeon and anaesthetist agree to proceed and the surgeon performs a total abdominal hysterectomy.

Eighteen months later you are working with the obstetrics and gynaecology consultant in a routine list and he calls you to one side between cases. He asks if you remember the case of Maria Sanchez. He says that although Maria has made a complete recovery following surgery and a course of radiotherapy she is suing the trust for removing her uterus without consent. You may be required to give evidence in court.