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Medicolegal Challenge in Obtaining Consent for Urgent Airway Management

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CASE DESCRIPTION:

A 36 year old male presented to ED with fall while inebriated. No injuries except laceration of tongue, was alert and awake with stable vitals. Imaging studies were unremarkable. Admitted for observation and alcohol withdrawal prophylaxis, his mother assured by ED no intervention would be needed. Patient developed progressive swelling of his tongue overnight, started desaturating on supplemental oxygen and had episodes of altered mental status possibly due to CO2 narcosis. Emergent fiber optic intubation and ABG was planned, his mother refused. Patient was transferred to monitored bed and relevant refusal of treatment documentation was done. Patient improved with conservative management over next 48 hours and was discharged home.