

5. Anaesthesia

The anaesthetist >> Temperature

More than half the patients were hypothermic after open surgery.

Patients undergoing open aortic surgery are very vulnerable to heat loss. Anaesthetists were asked what site was used to monitor the patient's temperature (Table 17) and the patient's temperature at the end of the operation (Table 18).

Table 17. Site of temperature	
Site	Total (answers may be multiple) <i>n</i> =752
Nasopharyngeal	426
Oesophageal	84
Tympanic	40
Axillary	16
Other	7
Unknown	38
Not answered	142

Table 18. Patient temperature at the end of the operation						
Temperature	Elective	%	Emergency	%	Not answered	Total
> 36 degrees C	171	49	68	38	16	255
34 – 36 degrees C	171	49	93	51	26	290
< 34 degrees C	4	1	20	11	4	28
Sub-total	346		181		46	573
Unknown	29		38		7	74
Not answered	59		45		1	105
Total	434		264		54	752

More than half the patients were hypothermic (<36°C) at the end of the operation (Table 18). The adverse effects of low temperature are well documented: hypothermia can lead to cardiac arrhythmias and adverse effects on oxygen consumption, haemostasis and tissue perfusion. In view of the number of patients in whom the patient's temperature was being recorded, anaesthetists appear to recognise that temperature control is important. There are several interventions available to anaesthetists to prevent heat loss. Anaesthetists should make all possible efforts to prevent hypothermia.