

Dr. Newbie and the Central Line

Dr. Newbie is in his first year of surgery residency when he is asked to insert a central line by the rounding physician, Dr. C. Dr. C says he has “full confidence” in Dr. Newbie’s ability, since Dr. Newbie has watched him do the procedure many times and has shown great skill so far in all surgical procedures. Much to Dr. Newbie’s surprise, Dr. C leaves the room to help with another case. Dr. Newbie continues with the procedure, but inadvertently nicks a major artery. The patient begins to bleed out, and the surgery suddenly becomes much more complicated. The patient now needs a blood transfusion and a longer recovery time than previously stated, but it will be impossible to get the patient’s family’s permission for these things without telling the family about the mistake that has happened. The patient is technically Dr. C’s patient, and Dr. C had discussed the operation with the patient and family earlier, indicating that he would be the one doing the surgery. But now Dr. C is nowhere to be found, and decisions about further medical care need to be made quickly. What should Dr. Newbie do?