

Promotion of Independent CRNA Practice in Rural Areas

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Abstract

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Introduction: Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) provide the majority of anesthesia care in rural areas across the United States (Selbert, Alexander, & Lupien 2004). No federal mandate exists which states CRNAs must be supervised, yet some facilities require CRNAs to be supervised by anesthesiologists. CRNAs are equally safe in providing anesthesia care as physician anesthesiologists (Dulisse & Cromwell, 2010).

Background: Many policy makers and hospital administrators are unaware that regulations permit the safe, cost effective care of CRNAs. Indeed, many facilities are facing pressure to allow anesthesiologists to oversee practice, even in many rural areas. The question arises: How will perceptions of administrators and policy makers be affected by education regarding the legislative authority, safety, and cost-effective care of patients, to promote CRNA independent practice?

Process: In light of recent challenges to independent CRNA practice in rural areas, this capstone project provided a CRNA facts pamphlet to educate policymakers and hospital administrators to promote support of independent CRNA practice. This pamphlet was sent to Kentucky Association of Nurse Anesthetists (KyANA) board members with an anonymous survey to solicit input for revisions and recommendations for dissemination.

Results: Following a 16% response rate from the KyANA board, and discussion with practicing CRNAs, minor revisions were made to address current issues. Approximately 200 KyANA members received the pamphlet and the KyANA is in the process of distributing electronically to 879 KyANA members. Primary feedback includes support and plans to incorporate use of the pamphlet. Recommendations include ongoing updates and distribution on a national level.

Purpose

- Incorporate pamphlet and format education to enhance promotion of CRNA only practice.

Methods

- Perform a literature review to determine the benefits of independent CRNA practice.
- Develop a CRNA facts pamphlet to educate policymakers and hospital administrators.
- Provide an anonymous survey to the Kentucky Association of Nurse Anesthetists (KyANA) board members to solicit input for revisions to pamphlet material.
- Distribute facts pamphlet electronically to all KyANA members.
- Provide instruction regarding use of pamphlet at professional meetings to educate other CRNAs, policymakers, and administration staff of the value regarding independent CRNA practice.

Comparison

	Nurse Anesthetist	Anesthesiologist
Practicing Professionals in the U.S.	36,000	40,000
Average Annual Income	\$170,000	\$336,000
Minimum Education	BA, 1 year acute-care nursing, 2-3 years anesthesia training	BA, 4 years medical school, 4 years residency
Average Cost of Education	\$161, 809	\$1,083,795

Source: Nursing Economics

CRNAs have been practicing for over 150 years!

CRNAs are just as safe as physician anesthesiologists!

CRNAs cost about half that of anesthesiologists!

CRNAs are NOT federally mandated to be supervised!



CRNA Facts

- Overall anesthesia costs are reduced by having a CRNA only anesthesia practice.
- Patient safety remains the number one priority and is increased by a vigilant CRNA.
- No federal mandate exists which states CRNAs must be supervised, yet some facilities require CRNAs to be supervised by anesthesiologists.
- Surgeons do not have any increased liability when working with independent practicing CRNAs.
- A CRNA only anesthesia practice aligns itself with the healthcare changes outlined in the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and will bring about improved access to healthcare for rural facilities.
- CRNAs are reimbursed by all major insurance companies for their anesthesia care at the same rate as anesthesiologists.
- CRNAs provide the same level of safe anesthesia care as physician anesthesia providers.

Results

- Primary feedback from the KyANA survey includes support and plans to incorporate use of the pamphlet to promote awareness and benefits of independent CRNA practice.
- Region directors from the KyANA have agreed to email the pamphlet with instructions for its use.
- This capstone project ultimately resulted in a change in the manner information is presented to many decision makers regarding CRNA practice.

Implications

- CRNAs equipped with the facts pamphlet will be able to easily share information about cost reduction, improving patient care, and benefits of independent CRNA practice.
- Policymakers and hospital administrators will receive factual education regarding independent CRNA practice.