Patient Safety: CRNAs and Health-Related Impaired Practice

Position Statement, Policy and Practice Considerations

Certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs) with health conditions must be aware of their symptoms and potential treatment side effects and take appropriate measures, including seeking reasonable accommodation, to engage in safe patient care. The American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA) emphasizes the CRNA's responsibility to be physically and mentally able to perform duties for the delivery of safe, quality care.

Having and/or treating a health condition does not always lead to impaired practice. However, if a CRNA has a condition or is receiving treatment that may impair practice, the AANA recommends an appropriate clinical evaluation, including history, physical/mental health examination as applicable, and pertinent diagnostic testing. An evaluation focuses on the ability to perform individual CRNA job responsibilities. After evaluation, work responsibilities should be determined on an individualized basis considering functional impairment as it relates to the professional role and reasonable accommodations in compliance with applicable federal, state, and local law.

The AANA recognizes disclosure may be challenging due to fear of stigma, disciplinary action, and loss of privacy, practice privileges and income.[1-3] All CRNAs are encouraged to advocate for and collaborate in the development of non-punitive, evidence-based holistic workplace policies, practices and supportive resources that prioritize patient safety and address and promote professional and personal well-being.[2]

Policies and procedures should address clinician functional impairment, including awareness and disclosure, healthcare evaluation, potential monitoring and additional assessment, and protection of patient rights and healthcare professional rights, such as privacy and confidentiality.[4] These policies and procedures should be reviewed by legal counsel and must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and applicable law.

For additional resources related to the delivery of safe patient care, please see the following:

- Standards for Nurse Anesthesia Practice
- Code of Ethics for the Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist
- Addressing Substance Use Disorder for Anesthesia Professionals
- Patient Safety Fatigue Sleep and Work Schedule Effects
- Promoting a Culture of Safety and Healthy Work Environment
- Professional Attributes of the Nurse Anesthetist

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References

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4. Candilis PJ, Kim DT, Sulmasy LS, Acp Ethics P, Human Rights C. Physician Impairment and Rehabilitation: Reintegration Into Medical Practice While Ensuring Patient Safety: A Position Paper From the American College of Physicians. *Ann Intern Med.* 2019;170(12):871-879.

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