

The Current Challenge of AA Education: *Increasing the Supply to Meet a Growing Demand*

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Committee on Anesthesiologist Assistant Education and Practice

Recently, there has been a great deal of enthusiasm focused on legislative efforts in several states to gain new or to solidify existing anesthesiologist assistant (AA) practice. The successes have been very encouraging. Where the efforts have not yet been fruitful, clearer action plans and an increased resolve have offered valuable intermediate outcomes. The increased demand for AAs requires that we also consider the supply of AAs produced by education programs. In the same way that AA practice advocacy has benefited from an ASA/American Academy of Anesthesiologist Assistants (AAAA) cooperatively supported expansion strategy, we must now turn to address development of additional AA education programs.

Roots of AA Education

Since conception of the profession, AA education has been rooted in basic anesthesia sciences and clinical practice within, or closely tied to, academic anesthesiology departments. AA education began in the setting where clinical training occurred alongside that of residents and fellows. There is likely no better opportunity for practitioners to learn how to most appropriately and effectively extend the care of physician leaders of the anesthesia care team than in such a graduate medical education environment. Then, reciprocally, anesthesiologists familiar with AAs from shared training understand the respective roles. This anchor, originally forged in the legacy AA programs at Emory University and Case Western Reserve, has held strong for more than 40 years. Today's AA graduates have benefited greatly from the innovative teaching paradigms developed in graduate medical education, including the emphasis on life-long learning. Through the scholarly research of academicians,

advancements in physiology and clinical pharmacology are seen in a clinical context of intraoperative anesthetic management of medically complex patients. Supplemented by exposure in the busy world of private practice, AA graduates are well equipped to efficiently care for patients undergoing technically sophisticated surgical procedures.

Two New AA Education Programs Open in 2013

The University of Colorado program is due to open in August on the Anschutz Medical Campus in Aurora. The program is the latest in a sequence of successes over two years beginning with passage of AA practice legislation. Following subsequent approvals by the school of medicine and the board of regents last year, the AA program has been founded within the department of anesthesiology.

Quinnipiac University gained final approval by the board of education in January 2013 for its proposed AA program. The soon-to-open Frank H. Netter School of Medicine in Hamden, Connecticut, will be the home of the program.

These two new programs bring the national number to 10. Considering the growth from the two legacy programs in 2004, this number is encouraging but still far from being able to address the present and future needs for anesthesia providers. AAs will continue to serve the fundamental purpose of increasing patients' access to physician-led health care.

Workgroup on New AA Education Programs

A workgroup of Committee on Anesthesiologist Assistant Education and Practice (AAEP Committee) members is developing resources for use by institutions or departments who are considering opening an AA education program. The initial goal is to provide general information across a broad range of topics, including program structure and administration, budget development, curriculum design and managing clinical rotations. In addition to crafting these informational documents, a network of contact individuals is being recruited to answer specific questions and assist in solving the various challenges that invariably arise. The workgroup includes representation from the Association of AA Program Directors, who are the frontline experts.



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Serving ASA's Mission

Let me remind ASA members that the AAEP Committee's mission is two-fold: to engage anesthesiologists in the advancement of AA education, and to expand the participation of AAs in the anesthesia care team mode of practice. Our specific goals are to increase the number of AA educational programs and to facilitate efforts to enable AA practice in new states. ASA's mission is to "Advance the Practice and Secure the Future" of our specialty.

Committee membership includes AAs and anesthesiologists. As seen in the clinical environment, the professions work toward their mutual success. AAAA is the professional society for AAs. Leadership of ASA and AAAA maintain an ongoing dialog on shared issues that has produced a highly coordinated effort between the two societies.

If you have an interest in AA education, our committee can connect you with anesthesiologists and AAs who have decades of experience. We are ready to help you join the AA education process, whether you are interested in connecting with an existing program as a clinical rotation site or are considering launching a full education program.

AA Education Programs	
Emory University	Atlanta, GA
Case Western Reserve University	Cleveland, OH
	Houston, TX
	Washington, D.C.
South University	Savannah, GA
Nova Southeastern University	Fort Lauderdale, FL
	Tampa, FL
University of Missouri	Kansas City, MO
Quinnipiac University	Hamden, CT
University of Colorado	Aurora, CO

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