Ensure Veterans Access to High Quality Care

The American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA) represents more than 50,000 Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) and student registered nurse anesthetists, including 900 members serving in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). Nationwide, CRNAs deliver approximately 43 million anesthetics each year. CRNAs have provided the majority of anesthesia to our active duty military in combat arenas since World War I and predominate in veterans’ hospitals and the U.S. Armed Services.

On December 14, 2016, the VHA issued a final rule granting three of the four advanced practice registered nursing specialties full practice authority (FPA), excluding CRNAs. This wrongful rulemaking goes against countless studies, evidence, and recommendations.

- **Nurses first provided anesthesia while caring for wounded soldiers on the battlefields of the American Civil War more than 150 years ago.** Today, CRNAs provide anesthesia for all types of surgery and other procedures, to every type of patient, using every anesthetic technique, and practicing in every type of setting where anesthesia is required. Within the VHA and in the civilian sector alike, CRNAs provide anesthesia services across the entire care continuum.

- **Recognizing the full practice authority of all APRNs, including CRNAs, is consistent with recommendations from the National Academy of Medicine** and aligns with current APRN policy in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Combat Support Hospitals, Forward Surgical Teams and Public and Indian Health Services.

- **Both the Independent Assessment** and the bipartisan Commission on Care recommended that the VHA should move immediately to grant full practice authority to all four APRN provider types including CRNAs, noting that this policy would help address the increasing healthcare demands of our nation’s veterans by reducing veterans’ wait times for care and improving efficiencies and cost-effectiveness in the VHA system.

- **In its final rule, the VHA acknowledges the high quality of care provided by CRNAs,** stating that “The safety of CRNA services has long been recognized by the VHA and underscored by peer-reviewed scientific studies, including a major study published in Health Affairs which found that anesthesia care by CRNAs was equally safe with or without physician supervision.”

- **The VHA currently has 38 contracts with outside anesthesia providers costing over $100 million,** indicating a lack of internal resources to meet the growing healthcare demands of our nation’s veterans.

The AANA supports additional rulemaking to improve veteran’s access to care through the appropriate recognition of CRNAs as full practice authority providers.

**Action for Congress:** Contact the VHA to urge additional rulemaking to recognize CRNAs to their Full Practice Authority. Cosponsor legislation to be introduced by Representatives Sam Graves (R-MO-6) and Jan Schakowsky (D-IL-9) in the House and by Senators Jeff Merkley (D-OR) and Mike Rounds (R-SD) in the Senate.

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