



GUEST EDITORIAL

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To the Readers of, and Contributors to, the *AANA Journal*: Your Participation is Vital!

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The mission of the *AANA Journal* is a straightforward but lofty one:

It is the official scholarly journal of the AANA, publishing original manuscripts that foster our understanding of the science of anesthesia delivery and investigate issues, ideas, and innovations that advance the practice of nurse anesthesia.

Implicit in this mission statement are the concepts of informing practice, evaluating current interventions, and promoting inquiry that will lead to new advances in the broad spectrum of interests and responsibilities of the CRNA. This mission statement is thus congruent with that of the AANA's, which is "advancing patient safety and excellence in anesthesia."

To achieve the goals articulated in the mission statement of the *AANA Journal* we aim to publish novel, readable, engaging, and definitive papers that are of high quality serving one or both of the following purposes: improving patient care and guiding future research in the domain.

Since its inception in 1933, the *AANA Journal* has remained at the forefront of biomedical publications in aggressively implementing, often in advance of other journals, policies, procedures, and services that help ensure the achievement of the goals

implicit in its mission statement. In 2009, the *Journal* won 3 design awards: a Certificate of Excellence from the American Graphic Design Awards, the APEX 2009 Award of Excellence in the Most Improved Magazine or Journal category, and an

American Inhouse Design Award Certificate of Excellence. Various *AANA Journal* activities and services are listed in the Table.

We hope that both readers and authors alike have benefited from these changes. In a recent issue of

Submission and Review of Articles

- A speedy online submission and peer review system known as Editorial Manager at www.editorialmanager.com/aana
- Publishing a clear and concise Information for Authors in each issue, as well as on the AANA website and homepage of Editorial Manager
- An eclectic group of referees from academic and clinical domains
- Institution of a proactive conflict of interest policy
- Institution of a proactive process ensuring that authorship criteria are met

Ongoing Mentorship

- Actively supporting the annual Student Writing Contest
- Availability of mentorship by the editorial staff to authors
- Inviting presenters at the Annual Meeting to submit full papers
- Sponsoring the *AANA Journal* Writing Workshop at the Annual Meeting (Next workshop is scheduled during the 2011 Annual Meeting in Boston.)

AANA Journal Course

- Publication of a high-quality continuing education offering: the *AANA Journal* course
- Option of taking the annual *AANA Journal* course examination online

Attention to Readership

- Yearly reader assessment of the *Journal's* offerings
- Free electronic access to published papers placed on the public side of the AANA website
- Abstracts published from posters presented at the Annual Meeting
- Continuous effort to make the *Journal's* readability high

Readability and Design

- Editing and layout staff that ensures articles and columns adhere to a consistent style
- Improving the *Journal's* aesthetics with layout modifications
- Use of high-quality cover art, most of which is submitted by CRNAs and nurse anesthesia students to visually demonstrate the specialty

Table. *AANA Journal* Activities and Services

Anesthesiology, a synopsis of group discussions conducted at the 2008 and 2009 ASA Annual Meeting was provided.¹ Among the findings that emerged was the perception that “residents and clinicians don’t read it” (“it” referring to the journal *Anesthesiology*). To my thinking a journal that is poorly read is like a river that is running dry. To our readers, and to past, present and future contributors to the *AANA Journal*, I want to personally remind each of you that the *AANA Journal* is a tangible representation of who we are as a profession.

The *AANA Journal* appears, based on the yearly census that we conduct, to be widely read by an audience that extends well beyond the professional membership of the AANA. While this is laudable, I believe it would be myopic to conclude that we have done all that we can do. For this reason I’d like to offer a few suggestions for you to become (or remain) a highly active participant in the process:

1. Read the *AANA Journal*, and discuss it with your colleagues and contemporaries. We develop and publish it for you.
2. If you feel inclined, let me know how we are doing by writing to me at cbiddle@hsc.vcu.edu.
3. Because we are only able to publish that which is submitted to us, consider developing a high quality paper for possible publication.
4. If writing an article is too daunting, consider doing a book review on an interesting new professional book that you’ve discovered and find useful.
5. If you are not interested in developing a formal paper for submission or a book report, consider your role in the forum for scientific discourse (see section on “Engaging in a Professional Discourse”).

For those of you who have ideas and would like to discuss the potential for publication or who might like an early read of your paper to obtain some critical feedback, please

feel free to contact me directly via email. Many who have published in the *AANA Journal* took this very approach and found it both time saving and otherwise beneficial in the process.

A Special Need and an Opportunity for You: The AANA Journal Course

An essential service that the *AANA Journal* provides to its readers is the opportunity to earn continuing education credits that help to satisfy the recertification requirements associated with functioning as a nurse anesthetist. The *AANA Journal* is a pioneer in publishing high-quality, informative, and practice-relevant courses that have contributed meaningfully to the continuing education of our members. The yearly evaluations conducted by the AANA of its members consistently rank the *AANA Journal* course as an excellent product that meets the needs of the practicing CRNA. Readers benefit from a high quality offering that undergoes a rigorous credentialing process required by the American Nurses Credentialing Center Commission on Accreditation. The *AANA Journal* course continues to serve as an essential, lifelong learning opportunity that is an integral part of the fabric of the nurse anesthesia clinician and educator.

The *AANA Journal* course not only represents an opportunity for readers to gain credit but also for a contributor to share his or her expertise and professional interest by developing a course on a topic or domain of personal interest. If you would like to develop a course that satisfies the requirements of a continuing education product, please contact me. I would be delighted to discuss this with you. New drugs, new techniques, patient safety, informatics, technological advancements, and critical reviews all represent fertile ground for *AANA Journal* course development.

Engaging in a Professional Discourse

The notion of engaging in a scientific discourse is not unfamiliar to any of us. Consider a thoughtful discussion you recently had with a colleague about how a patient was managed. Or how about one where you rendered an opinion about the use of a new (or old) drug? Such discussions, like those that might occur in the wake of a grand rounds or a lecture that you attended, serve the purpose of a form of peer review.

Consider the phases of clinical trials resulting in the release of a new drug. Phase 1 is where the drug is tested in a small group to evaluate dosing, safety, and side effects. Phase 2 is where the drug is given to a larger group with the target condition to determine efficacy. Phase 3 is where the drug is given to a much larger target group, comparing it to existing treatments to evaluate its effectiveness and monitor side effects. Phase 4 is postmarketing surveillance where the information is gleaned regarding the drug’s risks, benefits, and optimal use.

A well-constructed, succinct Letter to the Editor commenting on or critiquing a published paper shares attributes of the phase IV trial in that it represents an essential part of the process of evaluating the paper in the context of day-to-day work of the CRNA, as well as interpreting and guiding future research relevant to intent of the original paper. Such a letter also becomes part of the formal biomedical record, as it becomes inextricably linked with the original article through its citation in databases such as PubMed or MEDLINE.

Like other biomedical journals, the *AANA Journal* follows the recommendation of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors that states “biomedical journals should have a section carrying comments, questions, or criticisms about articles they have published where the original authors can

respond.”² High-quality letters facilitate and formalize a reasoned dialogue, and promote a continuous clinical and scholarly critique, in effect, continuing an ongoing process of peer review.

We reserve the right to carefully critique letters and may request additional information from letter writers to ensure good science and ethical adherence. Unfortunately, there are unsavory, misguided examples where letters have been used to advance a personal agenda, obscure a clear conflict of interest, or maliciously refute a reasoned claim made in a published paper. There are even examples where industry has paid authors many

thousands of dollars to have letters published in selected journals.³⁻⁵

We tend not to publish letters that simply comment favorably on a published paper as such letters tend not to advance the discourse and are generally not that interesting to our readers.

Concluding Remarks

Our readers and contributors alike are absolutely vital to the process inherent in the stated mission of the *AANA Journal*. I wish to urge each and every one of you to become active players in this ongoing and evolving process of clinical scholarship. We need you.

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