GUEST EDITORIAL

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Toward Globalization of a Profession

The International Federation of Nurse Anesthetists [IFNA] has been striving to promote quality education and practice standards since it began in 1989. Many organizations throughout the world have recognized these efforts including the International Council of Nurses. This Guest Editorial summarizes IFNA's achievements and introduces IFNA's new initiative to enhance the quality of anesthesia care worldwide through an approval process for education programs.

Keywords: Approval of nonphysician anesthesia programs worldwide, international anesthesia education standards, international anesthesia practice standards.

The 9th World Congress for Nurse Anesthetists was held June 4-7, 2010, in The Hague, the Netherlands. During the meeting, participants celebrated the 20th anniversary of the International Federation of Nurse Anesthetists (IFNA) and witnessed the launch of the Anesthesia Program Approval Process (APAP). This process, along with appointment of a new IFNA Practice Committee, completes all action steps necessary for the globalization of a profession. IFNA has much to be proud of.

This column begins with a brief history of the development of IFNA. Action steps toward globalization of a profession are identified and briefly discussed. The history of IFNA's search for the most appropriate process for quality assurance in international education and practice precedes a description of the APAP. A call to promote quality assurance standards for nurse anesthesia education and practice throughout the world concludes this column.

Development and Purpose
The IFNA was established on June 10, 1989, when 11 representatives from countries throughout the world signed the charter. Today, 35 countries are IFNA members. The vision, mission, and objectives of IFNA are as follows[1]:

• *Vision.* The IFNA is the authoritative voice for nurse anesthetists and nurse anesthesia, supporting and enhancing quality anesthesia worldwide. As professionals, nurse anesthetists are recognized for their significant contribution to global healthcare as nurses, practitioners, teachers, administrators, researchers, and consultants. The IFNA participates in the formulation and implementation of healthcare policy and the recognition of nurse anesthetists as essential and cost-effective healthcare providers.

• *Mission.* IFNA is an international organization representing nurse anesthetists serving the public and its members. The mission of the federation is dedicated to the precept that its members are committed to the advancement of educational standards and practices that will advance the art and science of anesthesiology and thereby support and enhance quality anesthesia care worldwide. The IFNA establishes and maintains effective cooperation with institutions that have a professional interest in nurse anesthesia.

Objectives
The objectives of IFNA are to:

1. Promote cooperation between nurse anesthetists internationally.

2. Develop and promote educational standards in the field of nurse anesthesia.

3. Develop and promote standards of practice in the field of nurse anesthesia.

4. Provide opportunities for continuing education in anesthesia.

5. Assist nurse anesthetists' associations to improve the standards of nurse anesthesia and the competence of nurse anesthetists.

6. Promote the recognition of nurse anesthesia.

7. Establish and maintain effective cooperation between nurse anesthetists, anesthesiologists, and other members of the medical profession, the nursing profession, hospitals, and agencies representing a community of interest in nurse anesthesia.

Action Steps for Establishing a Global Profession
At the IFNA World Congress in Austria in 1997, Marjorie Peace Lenn, PhD, executive director of the Center for Quality Assurance in

International Education, outlined 5 steps for establishing a global profession.[2(pp398-399)] They are:

1. Act as an international witness for the need for professional standards in anesthesia.

2. Interact effectively with appropriate regional and international organizations.

3. Act as a liaison to other global professions.

4. Consider the development of an IFNA quality assurance program for nurse anesthesia educational and professional development programs.

5. Monitor and record its own progress through research, publication, and international forums.

The first action step to develop international professional anesthesia standards was begun in 1989 very soon after IFNA was chartered. IFNA Educational Standards for Preparing Nurse Anesthetists[2(p391)] were developed by the IFNA Education Committee and adopted by the Council of National Representatives on June 1, 1990. They were revised on June 23, 1999. IFNA Standards of Practice[2(p391)] also were developed by the Education Committee and approved by the Council of National Representatives on June 17, 1991. These standards were revised on May 18, 1996. The IFNA Code of Ethics[2(p392)] was adopted in May 1992; IFNA Patient Monitoring Guidelines, later changed to IFNA Patient Monitoring Standards,[2(p393)] were adopted in June 1998.

The second and third action steps toward globalizing the profession also have been accomplished. Throughout its existence, IFNA has interacted with appropriate regional and international organizations. Examples of groups with which IFNA has had liaison include European Economics Committee, World Health Organization, Center for Quality Assurance in International Education, World Federation of Societies of Anesthesiologists, International Hospital Federation, International Society for Quality in Health Care, and the International

Council of Nurses (ICN). IFNA is recognized as 1 of 7 affiliate members of ICN. IFNA's international standards on education, practice and monitoring, and the Code of Ethics have been endorsed by the ICN since 2002. IFNA stands ready to interact with any profession wishing to become a global profession.

The fourth action step to monitor the organization's progress has been achieved through international research, publications and meetings. For example, an extensive worldwide study of practice, education and legislation about nurse anesthesia was conducted by Lt Col Maura S. McAuliffe, CRNA, PhD, and Beverly Henry, RN, PhD, FAAN, with input from the World Health Organization between 1996 and 1999.[3] The study demonstrated the following: nurses administer anesthesia in 106 countries; nurses provide anesthesia in 77% of rural areas of the world and in 75% of urban areas; 57% reported they were required to have a physician anesthesiologist supervise their work; all had a formal educational program but some had to leave their countries to become educated; 50% reported continuing education was not available; and 74% reported that hospital policies as well as governmental regulation guide the practice of nurse anesthesia.

There have been numerous publications about IFNA, and the organization has conducted 2 symposiums (Lucerne, Switzerland, 1985 and Amsterdam, the Netherlands, 1988) and 7 world congresses: Oslo, Norway, 1991; Paris, France, 1994; Vienna, Austria, 1997; Chicago, Illinois, 2000; Helsinki, Finland, 2002; Lausanne, Switzerland, 2006; and The Hague, the Netherlands, 2010.

The fifth and final action step to globalize nurse anesthesia as a profession was taken at the 9th World Congress of Nurse Anesthetists in 2010, when the Council of National Representatives appointed a new Practice Committee and IFNA

launched APAP. The purpose of the Practice Committee will be to define the scope of practice of nurse anesthetists and other nonphysician anesthesia providers in member and nonmember countries; identify credentials necessary to practice as a nurse anesthetist in various countries and identify regulatory bodies responsible for credentialing; develop a model for continuing education and lifelong learning for countries with interest in this process; review and revise Practice Standards and Ethical Standards as necessary; and recommend speakers and topics to the Congress Planning Committee for future congresses.

Anesthesia Program Approval Process

Interest in international quality assurance for anesthesia education was confirmed in 1998 when the IFNA Education Committee proposed formal processes for both education and practice. Discussions on the issue were held at the 2000 World Congress in Chicago and the 2001 IFNA Board of Officers meeting. A presentation by the chair of the United States of America's (USA's) Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs (COA) during the 2002 World Congress in Helsinki provided IFNA with several options to consider on how to approve education programs while taking cultural, national or regional differences into consideration.

The first draft of an application was completed in 2007 by IFNA's Education Committee members from Switzerland, Africa, Taiwan, Sweden, and USA. As part of this process, 4 anesthesia education programs located in Sweden, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and USA completed a pilot project and were awarded "IFNA Recognition" in 1998. The process resulting in the official APAP included revisions based on results from the pilot project, a call for public comments, feedback from internal and external parties, and

final approval of the documents and process by IFNA decision-making bodies in 2010. APAP is based on IFNA's belief that nurses should be appropriately educated if they are utilized for preoperative or postoperative preparation of the patient; if they perform venous and arterial cannulations, induction and emergence of anesthesia, intubation, and extubation; and if they are left alone for any reason.[2(p386)] APAP addresses IFNA's concern that nurse education throughout the world is sufficient to support anesthesia practice and patient safety by asking programs to strive to meet global education standards.

• *Categories of Approval.*[4] APAP is designed to work with nonphysician anesthesia programs as they currently exist if they pledge to meet IFNA's Education Standards to the best of their abilities. Three categories of approval are available: registration, recognition, and accreditation; only 1 category will be awarded to a program at any given time. Offering 3 categories of approval recognizes (1) the diversity of nurse anesthesia programs throughout the world, (2) the economic stage of development of a country, (3) the resources available to individual programs, and (4) a commitment of diverse programs to a common standard of educational quality.

Each of the 3 categories requires a pledge to comply with IFNA's Education Standards and the signatures of the program director and the highest institutional official. Registration simply requires signatures and the pledge while recognition includes an additional curriculum audit to determine if it contains the elements of the curriculum portion of IFNA's Education Standards. No fees are charged for registration or recognition. Programs interested in seeking accreditation must submit a written self-study, host an onsite visit by IFNA representatives, and pay expenses.

Successful programs in all 3 categories are recognized by having their curriculums posted on IFNA's website and receiving certificates of achievement.

• *Eligibility.* Eligibility for approval or continued approval at 5-year intervals is as follows:

1. The anesthesia program educates nonphysicians.

2. Admission requirements for IFNA registration or IFNA recognition include an education in nursing or another scientific background that prepares a student to succeed in the anesthesia education program.

3. Admission requirements for IFNA accreditation include an education in nursing that prepares a student to succeed in the program.

4. There is official evidence from a governmental entity that the program is currently authorized, recognized, chartered, audited, accredited, or has some equivalent official status in the country, if available.

5. There is evidence that the program has not been denied approval, recognition or accreditation by a governmental or nongovernmental accreditation or quality assurance entity. (This requires the signature of a program official for confirmation.)

• *Inclusive Process.* IFNA believes that it is possible to improve the health and welfare of humanity by promoting international educational standards for nonphysician anesthesia programs. Based on this belief and for the purposes of program approval, it is the policy of IFNA to approve programs that admit students who are nurses or who are educated in another scientific area that prepares students to succeed in their anesthesia education. Although IFNA strongly supports a nursing background for admission, it also believes in an approval process that recognizes the differences that currently exist in the educational preparation of health professionals worldwide that have contributed to nurses and non-nurses being enrolled in anesthesia pro-

grams. IFNA believes that an inclusive process provides the greatest opportunity to improve anesthesia care to patients now and in the future.[4] Resources are available on IFNA's website at www.ifna-int.org for programs interested in learning more about APAP or completing applications.

Summary

In summary, IFNA has promoted the globalization of practice and education standards since it was chartered. Recent examples of this commitment are the inauguration of a Practice Committee and of APAP, an approval process for nonphysician anesthesia programs. It is expected that the IFNA Education Committee and Practice Committee will work together to increase visibility of nurse anesthetists internationally, as well as move toward ongoing improvement of anesthesia care through the continued standardization of nurse anesthesia as a global profession.

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