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Safe and effective
anesthesia



December 3, 2020

Re: COVID-19 Vaccine Prioritization and Distribution

Dear Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices,

I am writing from the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA), on behalf of 57,000 Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) and student registered nurse anesthetists. CRNAs are advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) licensed as independent practitioners who plan and deliver anesthesia, pain management, and related care to patients of all health complexities across the lifespan. CRNAs practice in hospitals, nonoperating room anesthetizing areas, ambulatory surgical centers, and office-based settings. They provide all types of anesthesia-related care for surgical, diagnostic, and therapeutic procedures. CRNAs provide anesthesia for all specialties including, but not limited to, general, obstetric, trauma, cardiac, orthopedic, gastrointestinal, dental, and plastic surgery. CRNAs administer anesthesia care to patients in urban, suburban, and rural locations in the U.S., and are often the sole anesthesia professionals delivering care to the military, rural, and medically underserved populations.

We commend the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) on prioritizing frontline healthcare personnel and residents of long-term care facilities for the first phase of COVID-19 vaccine allocation. The supply of available vaccine may be limited at first, therefore further prioritization among health care personnel may be necessary. AANA recommends that anesthesia professionals, such as CRNAs, who provide direct patient care remain at the top of the vaccine allocation prioritization. CRNAs are in close contact with a patient's airway during intubation, anesthesia delivery, and extubation, increasing their potential exposure to the SARS-CoV-2 virus through droplet or aerosol routes. CRNAs are also integral in the critical care setting, providing airway management, ventilator support, vascular volume resuscitation, and advanced patient assessment to COVID-19 positive patients. As highly-skilled anesthesia experts, CRNAs' sedation, anesthesia, and pain management services are needed by all patients in all settings. Therefore, a healthy and immune anesthesia workforce will be critical to facilitate continued surgical, diagnostic, and therapeutic procedures as well as to care for those critically ill from COVID-19.

CRNAs have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic, handling high-acuity situations and caring for critically ill patients. Providing them access to the COVID-19 vaccine will greatly support their ability to continue to care for patients during the second COVID-19 wave and beyond. AANA and its' members look forward to continued collaboration with our healthcare colleagues to help implement a vaccination plan. We thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please do not hesitate to contact Brett Morgan, DNP, CRNA at (847) 655-1136 or bmorgan@aana.com if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randall D. Moore". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "R".

Randall Moore, DNP, MBA, CRNA
AANA Chief Executive Officer