AANA Updates

Code of Ethics for the Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist

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In July 2018, the AANA Board of Directors approved a modernized Code of Ethics for the Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist. This code, first adopted in 1986 and most recently revised in 2005, establishes the ethical standards for the nurse anesthesia profession and guides the CRNA in ethical analysis and decision making in daily nurse anesthesia practice. The substantial revisions and updates bring this document into the millennium by adding standards that focus on contemporary anesthesia care and addressing important areas of nurse anesthesia practice, such as leadership, research, and business.

The Code of Ethics serves the following purposes:

• Sets forth the ethical values and responsibilities of the individual CRNA and the profession of nurse anesthesia as expressed in broad principles of conduct and professional integrity.

• Expresses the nurse anesthesia profession’s understanding of its commitment to society.

• Applies to CRNAs in all practice roles (e.g., clinical practice, nurse anesthesia-related leadership, educational and research activities).

• Serves as a resource to the AANA Board of Directors in reviewing and acting upon complaints of professional misconduct against members of the AANA.

The Code’s development process included extensive research and benchmarking to determine the current ethical norms and values in healthcare and anesthesia. Staff conducted a systematic literature review of relevant healthcare ethics topics, articles, and resources. Benchmarking included review and analysis of ethics-related documents of major national healthcare organizations. Staff then performed a gap analysis to determine relevant ethical principles in need of addressing.

In this month’s message, Garry Brydges, DNP, MBA, ACNP-BC, CRNA, FAAN, discusses important news on the advocacy and practice fronts.

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News from around the association in this month’s Inside the Association section includes a call for applicants to serve on Fiscal Year 2020 AANA committees; an update from CEO Randy Moore, DNP, MBA, CRNA; a discussion of cultural awareness for preceptors; and more.

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Read about what to do if you have been reported to the National Practitioner Data Bank in this month’s Business of Anesthesia column.

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This month’s Practice Matters column looks at the problem of production pressure in the operating room and what CRNAs can do to create a safety-first culture.

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Draft development and revision included input from a broad range of stakeholders and experts in healthcare ethics. In addition to the AANA Practice Committee and Professional Practice staff, the following groups from the AANA provided input and feedback: members who submitted comments during the open comment period; State Government Affairs/Legal; Education and Professional Development; Research and Quality; General Counsel; and the AANA ethicist. AANA affiliates also reviewed the document and provided input, including representatives from the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs and the National Board of Certification and Recertification for Nurse Anesthetists. Finally, external subject matter experts, including CRNAs with expertise in healthcare ethics, reviewed and commented upon the document.

This extensive process culminated in the finalization of a Code of Ethics that defines contemporary ethical responsibilities in the practice of nurse anesthesia. The Code has several expanded sections, including the preamble, ethical responsibility as a professional, and ethical responsibility in research.

Topics covered include:

- Responsibility to patient
- Responsibility as a professional
  - Competence and responsibility in professional practice
  - Leadership
  - Clinical practice and the interdisciplinary team
  - Role modelling and education of others
  - The profession
- Responsibility in research
- Responsibility in business practices
- Responsibility when endorsing products and services
- Responsibility to society

Every CRNA should read, understand and uphold these ethical standards of conduct. In addition to the AANA’s reliance on this Code, many healthcare organizations refer to the Code of Ethics in medical staff bylaws and other documents to define the ethical responsibility of a CRNA. You can find the Code of Ethics for the Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist at www.aana.com/PracticeManual. For questions or comments, please contact the AANA Professional Practice Division at practice@aana.com.