



## **AANA Commitment Statement for the National Academy of Medicine Action Collaborative on Countering the US Opioid Epidemic**

The American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA) represents nearly 53,000 Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) and student nurse anesthetists, hands-on providers of more than 45 million anesthetics to patients each year in the United States. As anesthesia experts, CRNAs are uniquely qualified to help mitigate the opioid crisis by utilizing and promoting non-opioid and opioid-sparing pain management techniques in both acute and chronic pain care settings. The association and its members strongly advocate for the use of enhanced recovery after surgery protocols to reduce opioid use during surgery and other procedures requiring anesthesia care to help prevent post-surgical opioid dependency and abuse, and in October 2018, the SUPPORT Act added CRNAs to the list of providers permitted to prescribe medication-assisted treatment (MAT) to individuals already suffering from opioid dependence.

The AANA's commitment to rethinking pain management to reduce or eliminate the use of opioids while maintaining patient comfort and safety and helping to prevent post-surgical dependence on powerful narcotics is an ongoing initiative. Research has shown that approximately 3 million Americans become persistent opioid users after surgery, and 83 percent of heroin users began by using prescription pain medications.

The AANA believes that acute and chronic pain is best treated and managed by an interdisciplinary team that actively engages the patient to diagnose and manage their pain for improved well-being, functionality, and quality of life.

- As members of the interdisciplinary team, CRNAs are well positioned to provide holistic, patient-centered, multimodal pain treatment and management across the continuum of pain and in all clinical settings (e.g., hospitals, ambulatory surgical centers, offices, and pain management clinics).
- Patient-centric pain management offers patients greater transparency, understanding and engagement in their own care. Patients need to be encouraged to play an active role in their healthcare and pain management plan by talking to their healthcare team, informing the team of any concerns they have, and asking questions to ensure everyone has the information they need.
- CRNAs integrate multimodal pain management as an element of enhanced recovery after surgery (ERAS) protocols to manage pain. ERAS pathways use multimodal pain management to reduce the use of opioids and shorten overall hospital length of stay. Management occurs from pre-procedure to post discharge using opioid sparing techniques such as regional anesthesia, peripheral nerve blocks, non-pharmacologic approaches, and non-opioid based pharmacologic measures.

- Careful assessment and treatment of acute pain, which may include appropriate opioid prescribing, can decrease the risk of acute pain transitioning to chronic pain and the possible development of opioid dependency and abuse.

As the primary point of contact for pre- and post-operative patients, CRNAs are doing their part to end the opioid crisis by utilizing a holistic, patient-centric approach to pain management and opioid prescription, offering patients greater transparency, understanding and engagement in their care. The AANA is committed to working with the members of the Action Collaborative to put an end to the opioid epidemic.