



About WSA

The Wisconsin Society of Anesthesiologists (WSA), the state component society of the American Society of Anesthesiologists, serves Wisconsin physician anesthesiologists, the general public, and elected officials as the resource on standards of ethical anesthesia care. We represent over 600 active member, 150 resident members from the two medical academic centers at the Medical College of Wisconsin and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, as well as scientist and affiliate members.

WSA's mission is to promote the highest level of patient safety; to disseminate information in regard to anesthesiology; to protect the public against unqualified practitioners of anesthesiology; and safeguard the professional interest of its members and develop and further the specialty of anesthesiology.

What is a Physician Anesthesiologist?

Physician anesthesiologists are medical doctors specializing in anesthesia care, pain management and critical care medicine, and have the necessary knowledge to understand and treat the entire human body.

Physician anesthesiologists have 12 to 14 years of education, including medical school, residency and 12,000 to 16,000 hours of clinical training. Physician anesthesiologists evaluate, monitor and supervise patient care before, during and after surgery, delivering anesthesia, ensuring optimal patient safety, and leading the Anesthesia Care Team that may include anesthesiology fellows and residents, nurse anesthetists, and anesthesiologist assistants.

Role of the Physician Anesthesiologist

If you're preparing for surgery, you've probably given a lot of thought to the education, training and experience of the surgeon performing the procedure. But you may not have thought much about the physician anesthesiologist or the importance of his or her medical expertise in your procedure — before, during and after — to keep you safe and comfortable.

Physician anesthesiologists carefully review your medical records and discuss the case with you and your surgeon before surgery to assess your health and make decisions to ensure your anesthesia care is as safe and effective as possible. They monitor your vital signs during surgery, including how well your heart and lungs are working while you're unconscious, and they take care of you after surgery to make sure you're as comfortable as possible while you recover.

Physician anesthesiologists also play a key role in taking care of patients who are having minor surgery or who may not require general anesthesia, such as women in labor who need to be awake and alert but require effective pain management. They also help patients who have serious pain from an injury, or chronic or recurring pain such as migraines or ongoing back problems.

Anesthesiologists provide the following types of Anesthesia care:

- **General anesthesia.** This type of anesthesia is provided through an anesthesia mask or IV and makes you lose consciousness. It is used for major operations, such as a knee replacement

or open-heart surgery.

- **Monitored anesthesia or IV sedation.** IV sedation causes you to feel relaxed and can result in various levels of consciousness. Depending on the procedure, the level of sedation may range from minimal (making you drowsy but able to talk) to deep (meaning you won't remember the procedure). This type of anesthesia often is used for minimally invasive procedures such as colonoscopies. IV sedation is sometimes combined with local or regional anesthesia.
- **Regional anesthesia.** Pain medication to numb a large part of the body, such as from the waist down, is given through an injection or through a small tube called a catheter. You will be awake but unable to feel the area that is numbed. This type of anesthesia, including spinal blocks and epidurals, often is used during childbirth and for surgeries of the arm, leg or abdomen.
- **Local anesthetic.** This is an injection that numbs a small area of the body where the procedure is being performed. You will be awake and alert but feel no pain. This is often used for procedures such as removing a mole, stitching a deep cut, or setting a broken bone.

Surgery: Before, During, and After

Physician anesthesiologists guide you through your entire surgical experience:

- **Before surgery** – In the days or weeks before your surgery, your physician anesthesiologist will make sure you are fit for surgery and prepare you for the procedure by asking detailed questions about your health, examining you and reviewing tests. Your physician anesthesiologist will answer your questions about the surgery and anesthesia and will create a plan developed specifically for you to ensure a safe and successful procedure.
- **During surgery** – The physician anesthesiologist manages your pain control and closely monitors your anesthesia and vital body functions during the entire procedure, working alone or with an Anesthesia Care Team member. Your physician anesthesiologist will manage medical problems if they occur during surgery, as well as any chronic conditions you have such as asthma, diabetes, high blood pressure and heart problems.
- **After surgery** – In the recovery room, the physician anesthesiologist supervises others who will care for you and monitor your recovery — your breathing, circulation, consciousness and level of oxygen — and is immediately available if there are questions or concerns. The physician anesthesiologist typically is the person who decides when you have recovered from the effects of anesthesia and are ready to go home or be moved to a regular room in the hospital or the intensive care unit. The physician anesthesiologist also creates a plan for your recovery and may be involved in pain management after you go home.

Treatment of Chronic Pain

Physician anesthesiologists specialize in pain control, and some focus their practices on treating patients with chronic pain. If you suffer from pain that won't go away, such as migraine headaches, back pain or pain caused by a condition such as fibromyalgia, ask your doctor about a referral to a physician anesthesiologist who specializes in treating chronic pain.

For questions, please contact WSA's lobbying team at Hubbard Wilson & Zelenkova (608) 255-0566

Wisconsin Society of Anesthesiologists Incorporated

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