



About WSA

The Wisconsin Society of Anesthesiologists (WSA) serves Wisconsin anesthesiologists, the general public, and elected officials as the resource on standards of ethical anesthesia care. We represent over 700 active members, 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 an Anesthesiologist?

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.

Anesthesiologists have a minimum of 12 to 14 years of education, including college, medical school, and residency, totaling 12,000 to 16,000 hours of clinical training.

Anesthesiologists evaluate, monitor and supervise patient care before, during, and after surgery, delivering anesthesia, ensuring optimal patient safety, and leading the Anesthesia Care Team (ACT) that may include anesthesiology fellows, residents, nurse anesthetists, and anesthesiologist assistants.

Role of the 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. However, you may not have thought much about the anesthesiologist or the importance of his or her medical expertise in your procedure — before, during, and after — to keep you safe and comfortable.

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, to make sure you are safe. They take care of you after surgery to make sure you're as comfortable as possible while you recover.

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 uses anesthesia gas and other drugs to make sure you are completely unconscious for the entire surgery. It is used for many 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.

Treatment of Chronic Pain

Anesthesiologists specialize in pain control, and some of these physicians focus their practices on treating patients with chronic pain.

Extensive training in Pain Medicine is requisite to develop this skill to minimize harm and maximize patient recovery and relief. Pain Medicine is a subspecialty involving many areas of interest and different medical disciplines. The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) defines specific educational requirements for Pain Medicine fellowship programs and also recognizes the importance of distinct clinical training in anesthesiology, neurology, physical medicine, rehabilitation and psychiatry.

Pain Medicine is the practice of Medicine. The licensure, training and clinical experience of non-physicians is insufficient to provide the medical expertise required for the evaluation, diagnosis, and management of complex pain, especially advanced invasive interventional procedures.

The WSA strongly opposes the independent practice of pain medicine by non-physician providers. Advanced practice nurses may work together with and under the supervision of Pain Medicine physicians. In preserving our patients' best interests, the WSA maintains an ongoing commitment to the delivery of safe, multidisciplinary, physician-led pain care.

Please contact WSA's lobbying team, Hubbard Wilson & Zelenkova at (608) 255-0566 with any questions.