

“You will never plow a field by turning it over in your mind”
-Irish Proverb



I have just returned from the AANA Fall Leadership Academy in Newport Beach, California. It was good to see so many committed CRNAs together in such a picturesque setting! For those of you who could not join us, it was an uplifting and energizing meeting. We all worked together to tackle some of our profession's pressing issues, brainstorm ways of improving our state and national associations, and operationalize the "Fifty State Strategy." This initiative is focused on better meeting the needs of our members through the state associations. The ground swell of information came from the state leaders in attendance. The AANA leaders will now use this information to enhance our national association. It became clear that we all are striving to create a user-friendly organization that is not only responsive to our members, but aims to advance safe anesthesia care for our patients.

Just a few examples of the actions taken by your Board of Directors in response to your feedback:

- Your Program Committee is creating the plan to hold the 2013 AANA Annual Meeting in Las Vegas at the Mirage. Remember – what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas!
- The Program Committee has heard you loud and clear: August is a difficult month to plan "time off." The Board approved their recommendation to move the Annual meeting in 2014 to September. Neither the location nor the date has been confirmed yet. We realize, however, that many of you need to know so that your state meetings can be planned accordingly.
- Amid the storm of ideas generated by the Program Committee, the meeting schedule will be revised to make it easier for members to maximize their CE time while decreasing the meeting length by one day. Be on the lookout for some creative changes that will take our Annual Meeting far into the future!
- The new and improved AANA website will be going "live" on December 5, 2011. The search engine will be greatly improved and layout will be more user-friendly. The current site will continue to work during this migration period, but no new information will be uploaded until the new site is active.

The Board of Directors also met for 4 hours with the NBCRNA board. The NBCRNA will be reviewing all comments received about the proposed CPC program through their website, the AANA website, and letters and phone calls made. An analysis will commence using a Delphi method. Three clinicians from the AANA Board of Directors will participate in the process. The NBCRNA Board of Directors is scheduled to meet again in mid- January to review the results of

the analysis. They will present their findings to the AANA Board of Directors at the Board Meeting scheduled during the Assembly of School Faculty in February 2012. Both Boards have voiced a commitment to work together so that a solid process for validating continued competence is constructed and reflects member input.

The AANA BOD also met with the COA. The COA Board members are diligently working to increase efficiencies during this period of global economic uncertainties. They have assured us they are operating at full power and are becoming "lean and mean" (in a good way!). In the spirit of continuous improvement, the AANA Board also shared all feedback we have received from our members about our educational programs. The COA appreciated hearing our members input. A major revision of the COA Accreditation Standards for our Programs is in progress. The first call for written comments is planned to go out in March of 2012, following a hearing on the first draft of the Standards at the Assembly of School Faculty meeting in February of 2012. Please feel free to contact the COA at 847-655-1160 to let them know of your interest in providing feedback, or email Pauline McKenna of the COA at pmckenna@coa.us.com.

Our annual effort to achieve 100% membership renewal continues. What would it say to our healthcare colleagues and the general public if we could boast that 100% of the CRNAs in the U.S hold membership in the AANA? We have never been a complacent group that seeks to divide and conquer. Our history reflects a profession that is engaged, committed, and overcomes challenges by working together. With that said, the Board voted to waive late fees for renewals through January 6, 2012. In our desire to ensure that all of our State Associations and our National Association is both strong and robust, we are "tightening our belt" and seeking every opportunity to eliminate unnecessary spending. If you know a colleague who has not yet renewed, let them know the impact it has on all of us. We are only as strong as our weakest link.

Once again, Region 2 and Region 7 Presidents and President-Elects will "Retreat" during the Mid Year Assembly in Washington, DC. Last year's joint conference resulted in many strategic ideas and new relationships. We look forward to sharing more ideas and successes this year.

Other news if interest:

AANA Foundation

The AANA Foundation's new fundraising campaign--*Proof is Power*, or *P²*-- highlights the impact of scientific research and shines a bright light on the landmark 2010 studies "No Harm Found When Nurse Anesthetists Work Without Supervision by Physicians" (conducted by Research Triangle Institute and published in *Health Affairs*, August 2010) and "Cost-Effectiveness Analysis of Anesthesia Providers" (conducted by the Lewin Group, published in *Journal of*

Nursing Economic\$, June 2010). These important studies were supported in part by the AANA Foundation, whose mission is to enhance the science of anesthesia through education and research. To learn more about the P² campaign, the "No Harm Found" and "Cost-Effectiveness" studies, the AANA Foundation's many programs, and how to help the Foundation continue its important work to improve patient safety and support CRNA practice, go to www.aanafoundation.com. Please donate today on behalf of your profession, yourself and your patients.

Take a Long Look at "CRNAs at a Glance" □ Recently updated, the AANA's one-page fact sheet "CRNAs at a Glance" is available on the AANA website. This document is a great handout for lobbying, speaking with the media, and many other situations.

How Might the Congressional Deficit Supercommittee Affect CRNAs? □ A powerful new congressional committee made up of equal numbers of Republicans and Democrats from the House and Senate could have great influence over CRNA reimbursement and practice as it begins work identifying at least \$1.2 trillion in federal budget savings over the next 10 years. The supercommittee has until Nov. 23, 2011, to present Congress with a budget reduction package, which Congress must then pass by Dec. 23 or trigger automatic federal spending reductions totaling about \$1.2 trillion, half from national security accounts. Because public benefit health programs like Medicare and Medicaid make up such a large segment of the federal budget and of anticipated federal spending growth, these programs are on the table for possible cuts that could impact CRNA reimbursement and practice.

AANA Urges CMS Action against Huge Medicare Payment Cuts □ The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) should take the lead in informing Congress about the huge impact that a 30 percent Medicare Part B cut to CRNA and physician payment would have on patient care in the United States, and should also fully recognize CRNA practice in every circumstance, said the AANA in a comment letter to CMS dated Aug. 30, 2011.

Medicare Agency Invites Providers to Apply for Bundled Payments □ On Aug. 23, the Medicare agency issued a request urging healthcare facilities, groups and healthcare professionals including CRNAs to develop and submit to the agency requests for bundling payments for services to Medicare beneficiaries. A facility providing hip replacements, for example, could arrange to submit to CMS a single claim rather than four (facility, surgeon, anesthesia, physical therapy outpatient care). For CRNAs, the initiative provides opportunity to demonstrate to facilities and to Medicare the value of CRNA cost-efficiency in a way that can boost demand for CRNA services relative to those of more costly competitors.

Noteworthy □

Infection Control in the News □ Surprise inspections of 21 Illinois surgery centers by the state's department of public health revealed deficient infection control practices and resulted in citations for 14 of them. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has a new "Stop Sticks" campaign that focuses on raising awareness and motivating healthcare workers to make the changes needed to reduce sharps injuries

Noridian Medicare Contractor Approves Acute Pain Reimbursement for CRNAs □ On August 19, the Noridian Medicare contractor serving several Western states released an update to its March 17, 2011, bulletin titled "CRNA Practice and Chronic Pain Management" stating that it will allow reimbursement for acute pain management services provided by CRNAs, but not for chronic pain management services by CRNAs. AANA continues to take action with the Medicare agency to restore reimbursement for all Medicare services within the CRNA scope of practice – a move that assures our patients access to necessary care.

AANA Requests Voting Position on AMA-RUC □ The AANA, in conjunction with other advanced practice nursing organizations and the American Nurses Association, has requested a voting seat on the American Medical Association's Specialty Society Relative Value Scale Update Committee (AMA-RUC). The AMA-RUC is the recommending body to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services on matters related to physician billing codes and their relative value. CRNAs bring extensive professional experience and insight into deliberations on anesthesia reimbursement and we look forward to contributing knowledge and expertise to the process.

In Closing...

"Thank You!" As new members of state association Boards of Directors are elected and take office, please join me in extending our appreciation to those who have served and continue to serve as state leaders. I would like to personally express my gratitude to every state leader who has worked tirelessly to lead our associations during the past year. The strength of our associations reflect your hard work and dedication! And to our new leaders that are taking office – welcome and thanks! As your Regional Director, I am here to support you in your leadership journey. Thank you for this incredible opportunity.