Statement on Substance Use Disorder

Committee of Origin: Occupational Health

(Approved by the ASA House of Delegates on October 26, 2016 and reaffirmed on October 13, 2021)

Substance Use Disorder (SUD) is a serious and continuing threat to patient safety and anesthesiologists' health and well-being. Affected anesthesiologists are in danger of losing their careers or lives to SUD.(1) Ongoing education on SUD is essential to prevent, recognize, and react when SUD is identified in oneself or a colleague.

Cooperation between anesthesia departments and pharmacy departments is essential to minimize the possibility of diversion of anesthesia drugs. By creating barriers to diversion, improving surveillance of medication transaction records and where feasible, testing the physical contents of drugs returned to the pharmacy as wastage, departments can protect operating room personnel and patients.(2)

If there is substantial evidence of SUD, a well-organized intervention should be conducted. In those cases where SUD is confirmed, enrollment in a Chemical Dependency treatment program skilled in the specialized care of anesthesia providers is recommended.(3) Reentry into the practice of anesthesia after appropriate treatment should be on a case-by-case basis with strong consideration given to required participation in a Physician’s Health Service (PHS) guided recovery plan.(4)

References

