

**Statement on the Aging Anesthesiologist**

**Committee of Origin: Occupational Health**

**(Approved by the ASA House of Delegates on October 17, 2018)**

The percentage of active members of the American Society of Anesthesiologists who are older than 65 years of age continues to increase. Most groups of physician anesthesiologists include at least one member who has achieved this age milestone. These experienced older and late career physicians can bring powerful benefits to their departments or groups and to their patients.

There are physiologic and cognitive changes which commonly occur with normal aging that can pose unique challenges for the older anesthesiologist. These changes can impact a late-career anesthesiologist's practice – enhancing some skills, such as wisdom and experience, while diminishing others, such as certain cognitive functions and physical dexterity. It is important to note that these age-related changes affect different individuals in different ways.

There are many reasons why the aging anesthesiologist may wish to remain clinically active, and why the workplace can benefit from their presence. Departments and groups are encouraged to have established policies on the aging physician in place. For example, modifications of the call schedule may be advisable and beneficial. Other workplace adjustments may be warranted based upon feedback from trusted colleagues and coworkers. Tools to fairly and compassionately address these issues should be considered.

Currently there is no universally accepted agreement on the role of cognitive testing to assess professional competency among late career physicians. Local policies and interventions regarding an individual anesthesiologist's capabilities are more appropriate than blanket mandatory retirement age or testing requirements.

Where an anesthesiologist may be reducing clinical workload, other opportunities such as teaching, research and administration may be considered.