



Leveraging Innovation and Leadership to Address a Public Health Crisis: Anesthesiologists as Frontline Heroes and Problem Solvers

The COVID-19 pandemic put an unprecedented strain on our health care system. You and all health care executives had to quickly pivot to ensure your institution was providing the safest and most effective care based on ever-changing guidance. It was all-hands-on-deck, and from the very beginning of the pandemic, anesthesiologists were among the leaders who stepped forward helping to provide life-saving, frontline critical care, established infection prevention protocols that protected their colleagues from infection, and problem-solved the challenges of this public health crisis. Their work has also advanced their institutions beyond the pandemic.

Innovate to improve care.

With their proven training, education, and expertise, anesthesiologists are made for these critical moments, whether during a pandemic, a trauma, or a natural disaster. Demonstrating the ability to think clearly in a crisis and a willingness to tackle difficult problems head on and create innovative solutions, anesthesiologists:

- Collaborated with administrators and critical care colleagues to build surge capacity and update emergency preparedness standards.
- Promulgated best practices for personal protective equipment (PPE) use and reuse, including devising creative designs and ways to recycle.
- Built upon Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines for appropriate testing and surveillance protocols for patients receiving surgical, procedural, and diagnostic care.
- Established protocols for intubation, insertion of special catheters, and proning.
- Addressed drug shortages including substituting sedatives when first-line drugs were not available.
- Repurposed their anesthesia gas machines normally used for surgery for use in the ICU when ventilators were in short supply.
- Converted positive pressure operating rooms to negative pressure rooms to reduce aerosolized transmission of the virus.
- Devised tactics to prevent burnout by addressing the enormous physical toll on providers, including incorporating wellness programs through a variety of formats and forums, such as Zoom meetings, town halls, and online department lounges to allow staff to express their fears and frustrations.
- Shared their experiences, knowledge, and lessons learned with colleagues around the country to improve care as the pandemic evolved, including through ASA-provided and sponsored town halls and educational materials.



Physician
Anesthesiologists

Made for
This Moment

Many of these solutions have evolved to become standard protocols or methods to treat patients and prevent the spread of COVID-19 to other health care workers.



American Society of
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Step up to do whatever was needed.

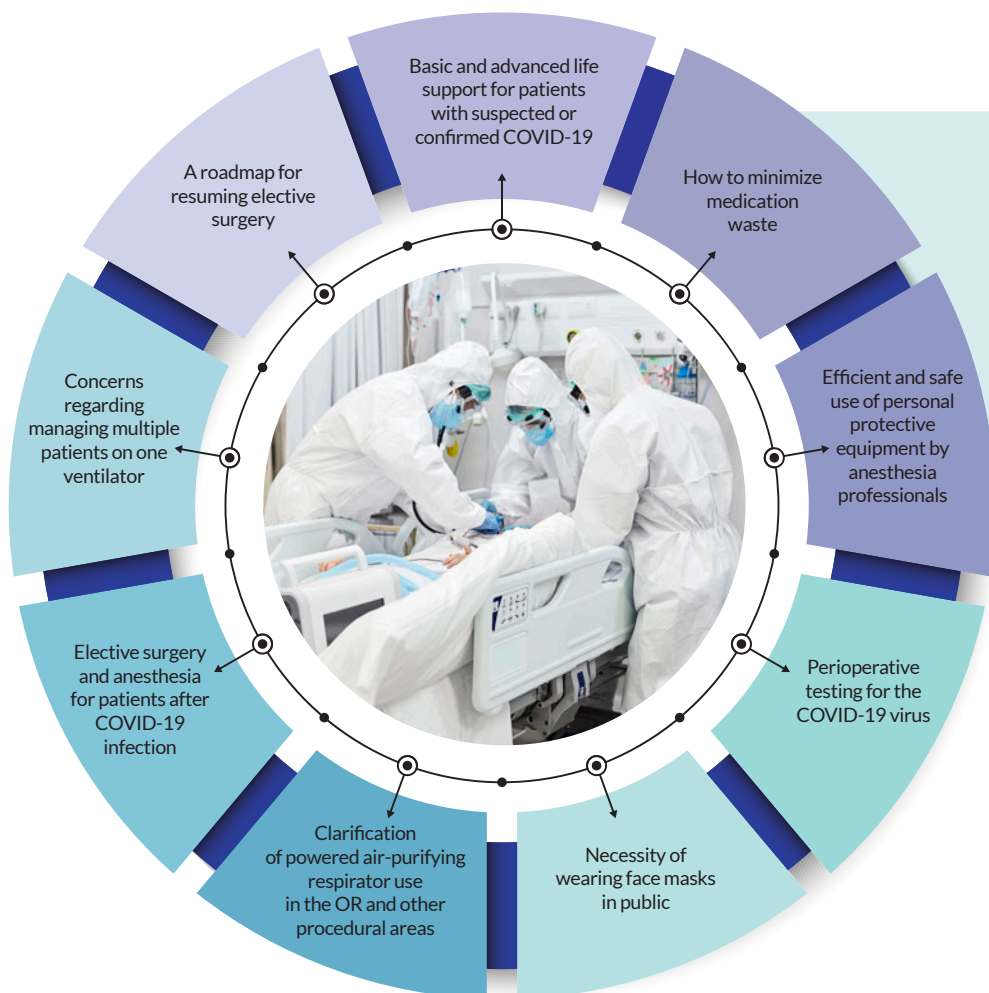
Strong leaders are flexible and modify their skills to respond to unpredictable circumstances and step up to do whatever is needed. Anesthesiologists:

- Employed their organization and efficiency skills—used every day to be sure the board runs well and the right beds are available for postoperative care—to flex and expand ICU capacity as needed.
- Readily volunteered to work whenever they were needed, as they are familiar with complex scheduling and working in shifts.
- Tackled numerous non-anesthesiology roles, including running ventilators, triaging, and transferring patients and filling in when there were shortages of workers, such as respiratory technicians.
- Constantly communicated with administrators and other specialists and departments to address ever-shifting needs and issues such as shortages as they arose.

Help move health care forward.

Anesthesiologists are supported by their national organization, which collated and distributed best practices and statements to support effective decision-making and policy implementation locally.

ASA COVID-19 Initiatives



The specialty also advocated and provided expertise to the White House COVID-19 Task Force, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and other agencies and groups and continues to do so.

Find out how anesthesiologists can help your institution innovate and lead beyond the pandemic.
[Learn more here](#)