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Quarterly Publication



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Past Presidents of the New York State Society of Anesthesiologists

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PGA PostGraduate
Assembly in
Anesthesiology

Fri. - Mon. Dec. 6-9, 2024 Marriott Marquis

New York City



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SPHERE

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On the cover:

Present at the NYSSA's Past Presidents Luncheon, held during PGA77, were: (top row, left to right) Drs. Richard A. Beers, Peter B. Kane, Richard N. Wissler, (fourth row, left to right) Jason Lok, David S. Bronheim, Paul H. Willoughby, (third row, left to right) Vilma A. Joseph, Scott B. Groudine, Christopher L. Campese, (second row, left to right) Michael P. Duffy, Andrew D. Rosenberg, Michael B. Simon, (front row, left to right) Jung T. Kim, Alan E. Curle, and Rose Berkun.

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Farewell Address to the NYSSA House of Delegates

**OUTGOING PRESIDENT JASON LOK, M.D., FASA
DECEMBER 9, 2023**

In my inaugural address last year, I talked about the importance of making connections, networking, and building bridges. I am happy to report that we were successful in all three of these activities this past year. The threats to physician-led anesthesia care in New York were rebuffed once again thanks to the efforts of our volunteers who met with New York's legislators and their staff members in Albany. We continue to strengthen our alliances with the leaders of ASA, the European Society of Anaesthesiology and Intensive Care (ESAIC), and the California Society of Anesthesiologists (CSA). We signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Sociedade Brasileira de Anestesiologia (the Brazilian Society of Anesthesiology) as well as the Chinese American Society of Anesthesiology. Dr. Tracey Straker became a member of the ASA Administrative Council when she was elected ASA vice speaker. We networked with New York Commissioner of Health Dr. James



Dr. Jason Lok delivers his farewell address to the House of Delegates.

McDonald and Deputy Commissioner Dr. John Morley, who expressed interest in creating a title for anesthesia assistants in New York state.

These are great accomplishments, but we cannot rest on our laurels. We must continue to be vigilant as we promote the mission of our society. Making connections and recruiting new members to the NYSSA will enable us to better support our profession and our colleagues while we work to ensure optimal patient care. Please share how our organization has opened doors to both education and advocacy, especially with those who recently joined your staff or started training at your practice. By integrating this message with your mentoring activities, you will sustain our mission.

I will conclude by giving credit to those who made my journey through the NYSSA possible. While I have been influenced by many great leaders of the NYSSA over the last 30 years, Dr. Paul Willoughby's mentorship had the most impact on me. He was my attending in anesthesiology and pain medicine at SUNY Upstate Medical University. Initially, he got me involved with scientific exhibits for both ASA and the NYSSA and later with the NYSSA's Committee on Public Education and Information, which became the Communications Committee.



Dr. Steven Schulman thanks Dr. Jason Lok for his service to the NYSSA.

While a member of this committee, I led the NYSSA's involvement in the New York State Fair and met with many future leaders like Christopher Campese and Rose Berkun. From there, I was given the opportunity to become the NYSSA's assistant treasurer and, eventually, your president. I was able to take advantage of these opportunities thanks to the support of my family, led by my wife, Janie, who is my best friend and advocate. We are blessed with our children, Justin, Joshua, and Julia. If you noticed a pattern of all our first names starting with "J," you would not be surprised that we named our dog Journey, symbolizing what we feel is the meaning of our lives.

I would like to recognize our current ASA director, Jonathan Gal, our lobbyist, Bob Reid, and our legislative counsel, Chuck Assini, for their expertise and advocacy on our behalf. I would also like to thank PGA General Chair Linda Shore-Lesserson for making the PGA an incredible meeting. Last but not least, "Stu and The Crew" made my presidency effective, meaningful, and enjoyable. They are Stuart Hayman, Lisa O'Neill, Kelly Mancusi, Will Burdett, and Christina Gruppuso. Again, thank you all for the opportunity to serve as your president this past year. ■

Thank you

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39th Annual | New York State Society of Anesthesiologists

Legislative Day in Albany 2024



Tuesday, May 7, 2024

**99 Washington Avenue
Albany, New York 12210**

8 am Breakfast Meeting

To include a discussion regarding legislative issues potentially impacting anesthesiologists in the state of New York

9:30 am Legislative Appointments (will be scheduled for members)

SPEAKERS:

Steven Schulman, M.D., President, NYSSA

Ansara Vaz, M.D., Chair, Government & Legal Affairs Committee, NYSSA

Charles J. Assini, Legislative Counsel to the NYSSA

Robert Reid, Partner, Reid, McNally & Savage



RSVP

◀ **Please scan to RSVP** and fill out the required information.

Questions? Contact Kelly Forster: Kellyk@lobbywr.com, (518) 465-7330

All NYSSA members are invited — you must RSVP.

Travel expenses will be reimbursed in accordance with the current IRS allowance. Overnight accommodations must be preapproved, please contact NYSSA headquarters.



President's Message

Carrying the NYSSA Forward

Inaugural Address to the NYSSA House of Delegates

STEVEN B. SCHULMAN, M.D., M.H.A., FASA

DECEMBER 9, 2023

I am honored and grateful to serve as president of the New York State Society of Anesthesiologists this year. I appreciate the responsibilities of this position, and I am ready to meet the challenges we face in the year ahead.

My goal this year is to strengthen the NYSSA by increasing both our membership numbers as well as the engagement of the anesthesiologists in New York state. The roads to engagement in the NYSSA are typically via our districts and committees.

Like most of you, being the NYSSA president wasn't on my bucket list when I was an anesthesia resident. I live on Long Island and have worked at St. Francis Hospital since 1995. In my early career, I knew that the NYSSA was responsible for the PGA, but I was largely unaware of its other functions. I received invitations to district meetings (back then it was via mailed invitations) and, curious, I attended my first meeting in 2002. It was a unique opportunity to interact with colleagues from other practices, to share clinical information, and to learn about legislative challenges.

In 2008, I approached Rob LaPorta, the District 8 director, and sheepishly asked him if one day, maybe when he had finished his last term, he would support me in being his successor. His answer: "How about tomorrow?" Very soon thereafter I won a contested election and was fortunate to win two subsequent contested elections in District 8. During my tenure, we had numerous NYAPAC fundraisers and excellent, well-attended meetings where we were able to convey important clinical and legislative information.

At that time, I had no intention or desire to move beyond serving as District 8 director. I did not think I had the time, knowledge, or leadership skills necessary to be a successful NYSSA officer and especially not president.

As I became more involved in my NYSSA activities, I learned about the committees and was intrigued by the Economic Affairs Committee. This committee, and its previous chair, Dr. Alan Strobel, literally changed the

course of my career. “Base plus time,” “conversion factors,” and “the 33% problem” were never part of my vernacular. I was a rapt student. Working on this committee fostered an interest that led me to becoming the president of my group and getting deeply involved in these issues on a national level.

New York is home to an estimated 5,600 anesthesiologists, and yet the NYSSA has only about 4,300 physician members. That represents a significant opportunity. There are approximately 1,300 anesthesiologists who do not see the value of NYSSA (and likely ASA) membership. Like me during my residency, many of them may not know about the numerous benefits of membership.

To the NYSSA’s district directors: Working with the other officers in each of your districts, I challenge you to form a web of engagement throughout each of your regions. Identify key contacts at each major and minor anesthetizing location. Determine where opportunities lie and bring more anesthesiologists into our organization. I also ask Melinda Aquino, the NYSSA secretary, and the two assistant secretaries, Greg Fischer and Sudheer Jain, to assist with these districts to make this happen.



Dr. Steven Schulman addresses the House of Delegates.

We have 16 standing committees within the NYSSA. Some of these committees are active year-round but many of them only gather at the PGA. These committees can do more to engage the membership.

Until I became involved on the ASA's Committee on Economics, I thought articles in the *ASA Monitor* were written by volunteers who were interested in and knowledgeable about the subject. I didn't know they were largely the product of the ASA committees communicating their expertise to the national membership.

Recently, I received an email from the NYSSA Critical Care Medicine Committee. I want to recognize Nibras Bughrara, the vice chair of that committee as well as the director of District 4. Nibras and his committee are spearheading a Webex-based statewide POCUS collaborative aimed at educating and engaging NYSSA members from around the state.

Diana Mosquera and Franklin Chiao, co-chairs of the NYSSA's Economic Affairs Committee, are considering having an "Introduction to the Economics of Anesthesia" Zoom meeting later this year.

I challenge all the NYSSA's committee chairs, vice chairs and members to consider what you can do in terms of Webex-based educational meetings



Dr. Steven Schulman receives the president's gavel from Dr. Jason Lok.

or publishing articles in *Sphere* to engage the membership during the coming year.

The final area of engagement I want to touch on is succession planning. One of the most important responsibilities of a leader is identifying and mentoring your successor. Even though I have not been a district director for many years, I remain very connected to my District 8 colleagues and attend most of their meetings. I do my best to inspire future leaders from my own backyard. Tracey Straker and Stacey Watt will be the next two NYSSA presidents. I intend to work with them, looping them into everything I am doing this year to help prepare them for when they serve in this role. I ask each delegate, district director, officer, and committee chair to think about who will take your place in the years ahead and carry this organization forward.

Engagement in the NYSSA may lead to leadership roles on a regional or national level. Congratulations to Tracey Straker, the incoming ASA vice speaker, as well as Stacey Watt and Vilma Joseph, who are the presidents of their county medical societies.

Last year I told Jason Lok that I anticipated a tremendous scope challenge during one of our presidencies. Thankfully, that did not arise in 2023. Based on the current political environment, many of us anticipate a significant battle in the year ahead. It may come to us in the budget, as a governor's opt-out, or via legislation. The NYSSA must be prepared to mobilize all the anesthesiologists in our state to fight to maintain safe anesthesia in New York.

As I said earlier, I am humbled, and I am grateful. I also cannot be more excited to work together with each of you as NYSSA president for 2024. ■



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Editorial

Exploring the Future of Anesthesiology at the PGA

SONIA G. PYNE, M.D., M.S., FASA

As members of the NYSSA, and anesthesiologists committed to the pursuit of excellence in patient care, many of us look forward to the PGA every year. The meeting brings together experienced anesthesiologists as well as younger generations with innovative ideas. The 77th annual PostGraduate Assembly, held in December at the Marriott Marquis in Times Square, had more than 3,450 attendees, including 371 medical students and 410 residents and fellows. This educational conference offered 170 opportunities to learn and network: Scientific Panels, Spotlight Sessions, Workshops, Case-Based Learning Discussions, and Engaging with the Experts sessions, as well as the annual Thoracic Symposium. Notably, nearly 100 vendors exhibited at the 2023 PGA!

The PGA not only reinforces the importance of our specialty in perioperative care, it also showcases the remarkable advancements shaping the future of anesthesia. The prospect of leveraging cutting-edge technology to refine the way we practice is both exciting and challenging — whether adopting new innovations in ultrasound (POCUS), airway management and artificial intelligence applications, or patient monitoring and/or drug administration. Beyond exploring the technical aspects of our work as anesthesiologists, PGA leaders ensured that the sessions also highlighted the holistic side of patient care, as well as the human side of what it means to be an anesthesiologist and the personal challenges we face. The significance of effective communication, successful hand-offs, empathy, and patient-centered care continues to be emphasized as a crucial part of our work. Anesthesiologists play a pivotal role in the perioperative space, and our ability to connect to patients on a human level contributes significantly to their overall experience. Topics related to wellness; mental health; diversity, equity and inclusion; mentorship; and retirement keep the human side of being an anesthesiologist at the forefront, where it definitively belongs. The PGA did an excellent job covering these important topics.

As we continue to navigate the complexities of modern healthcare, meetings like the PGA allow us to collaborate with and learn from one another and to advance our field, with the ultimate goal of improving the care we provide our patients. ■

The NYSSA Ad Hoc Committee on Environmental Sustainability in Anesthesia Presents: **Sustainability Tip of the Quarter**

“Planet vs. Plastics” is the theme for Earth Day 2024. Plastic is incredibly important to the safe delivery of anesthesia, but it also contributes to global pollution and detrimental health effects on humans.

INDIVIDUAL

Minimize “extra” and choose reusable. Plastic waste can be reduced by avoiding unnecessary opening of items and general excess in the name of “preparedness.” Rather, ensure availability of emergency or backup equipment and keep in a standard location, thereby minimizing the risk of inadvertent contamination while maintaining readiness. When available, choose reusable equipment and OR attire, as they typically contain less plastic. Be sure to follow all handling and cleaning recommendations to avoid early breakdown of these reusable items.

INSTITUTIONAL

Review OR attire guidelines and availability of reusable equipment. Disposable hats, masks, jackets, gowns, and drapes are all made from plastic. Reusable cloth hats are typically made of cotton, may be superior to disposable versions for infection control, and can improve OR communication.^{1,2} Reusable jackets for non-sterile staff can provide warmth while reducing costs and plastic waste. Careful consideration of reusable versus disposable equipment should include weighing safety regulations and scientific evidence of risk as well as independent life cycle analyses of financial and environmental differences between the products.



Want to learn more?

Submit your name and email via the QR code or email Deirdre Kelleher at dck7002@med.cornell.edu to get involved!

References

1. Markel TA, Gormley T, Greeley D, et al. Hats off: a study of different operating room headgear assessed by environmental quality indicators. *J Am Coll Surg* 2017 Nov; 225(5):573-581. doi:10.1016/j.jamcollsurg.2017.08.014.
2. Wong BJ, Nassar AK, Earley M, et al. Perceptions of use of names, recognition of roles, and teamwork after labeling surgical caps. *JAMA Netw Open* 2023 Nov 1; 6(11):e2341182. doi: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.41182.



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Euroanaesthesia 2024 is a prestigious annual congress in anaesthesiology and intensive care, uniting experts from over 100 countries.

With a diverse scientific program, including abstract presentations, educational sessions, and lectures by renowned specialists, the event offers an engaging platform for knowledge sharing. Covering a wide range of topics, from general anaesthesiology to intensive care and pain medicine, the congress explores science in relation to patients, organs, and therapies. Various session formats promote interaction, while workshops provide learning opportunities and foster innovation.

New York City



The 77th PostGraduate Assembly in Anesthesiology: Opening Session and R.W. Robertazzi Memorial Panel



Performers from The Beatbox House entertain attendees.



Dr. Cynthia Lien



Dr. Jason Lok



ASA President Dr. Ronald Harter





Dr. Cynthia Lien



Dr. Michael Todd



Drs. Michael Todd and Cynthia Lien



Dr. Meg Rosenblatt



PGA General Chair Dr. Linda Shore-Lesserson



E.A. Rovenstine Memorial Lecture

PGA General Chair
Dr. Linda Shore-Lesserson



Dr. Deborah Culley

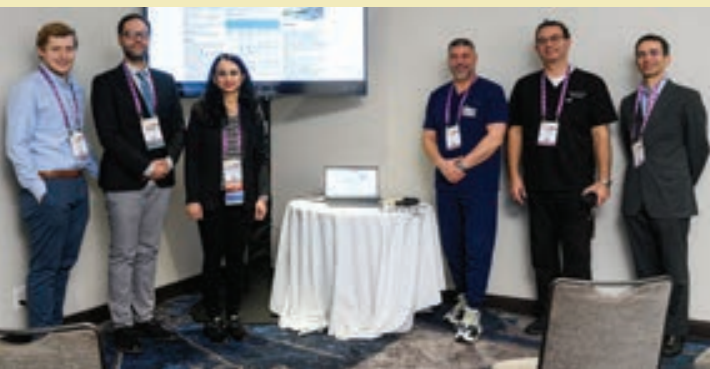


Dr. Jason Lok



The NYSSA Executive Committee: Drs. Steven Schulman, Ted Kim, Tracey Straker, Melinda Aquino, Stacey Watt, Jonathan Gal, Michael Simon and Linda Shore-Lesserson

Poster Presentations



Workshops



House of Delegates Meeting

Drs. Jason Lok, Stacey Watt and Melinda Aquino



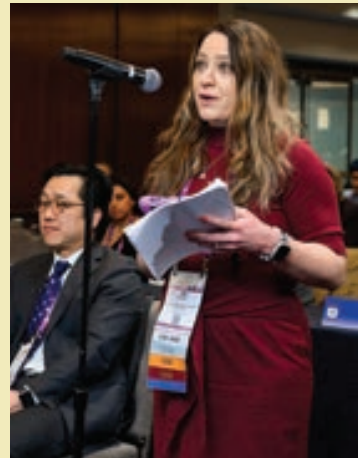
Outgoing ASA CEO Paul Pomerantz and Dr. Jason Lok



Drs. Linda Shore-Lesserson and Jason Lok



ASA President Dr. Ronald Harter addresses the delegates.



Dr. Tal Levy



Dr. Andrew Rosenberg



Dr. Tracey Straker



The NYSSA leadership participates in the House of Delegates meeting.



Dr. Stephanie Jones



ASA President-Elect Dr. Donald Arnold



Drs. Francine Yudkowitz and Jason Lok



Drs. Matthew Wecksell and Jason Lok



NYSSA Speaker Dr. Audra Webber



Incoming ASA CEO Brian Reilly



Drs. Jonathan Gal and Jason Lok



Sessions



Resident Program



Women Physicians Committee Happy Hour



Professional Diversity Committee Happy Hour



Technical Exhibits





Scenes From PGA77



Stuart Hayman and
Dr. Stacey Watt



NYSSA past presidents (left to right) Drs. Peter Kane, Alan Curle,
Paul Willoughby, Christopher Campese and Andrew Rosenberg

Scenes From the President's Reception

Dr. Jason Lok and
his wife, Janie Loui



Dr. Lok with his extended family



Drs. Jason Lok, Ted Kim and Andrew Rosenberg



Drs. Steven Schulman, Nibras Bughrara and Sudheer Jain



Stuart Hayman with State Anesthesiology Society of São Paulo Director of International Relations Prof. Claudia Marquez Simões and President Prof. Maria José Carvalho Carmona



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**Drs. Rose Berkun and
Cynthia Lien**



**CSA President
Dr. Antonio Hernandez Conte
and Dr. Steven Schulman**



Drs. Andrew Rosenberg, Michael Champeau and Maris Rosenberg

Celebrating 30 Years of the International Scholars Program

ELIZABETH A. M. FROST, M.D.

The International Scholars Program was conceived in 1993 during the annual meeting of the European Society of Anaesthesiologists. At that time, the European meeting was not as comprehensive as it is today, and the PGA, although the second-largest assembly of anesthesiologists, was also not well-known abroad. The NYSSA leadership thought it would be worthwhile to have a booth at the ESA, and Dr. Alexander Gotta (at that time the PGA scientific chair), Kurt Becker (the former NYSSA executive director), and I (technical exhibitor chair) attended. We were impressed by the number of young doctors from many countries who asked us about the PGA and expressed how much they would like to attend but had no funds to do so. The following year we began a pilot program, funded mainly by the NYSSA, to explore the interest in and feasibility of inviting a few foreign anesthesiologists to the PGA and offering some expense assistance such as shared hotel



Dr. Elizabeth Frost (right) with NYSSA and PGA leadership (left to right) Dr. Apolonia Abramowicz, Dr. Rose Berkun, Executive Director Stuart Hayman, and Dr. Steven Schulman

accommodations, free registration and partial airfare. The program was an immediate success. With the additional support of then-NYSSA President Dr. Paul Goldiner, the concept was expanded. Applicants who were recommended by members of the NYSSA completed an extensive form explaining why they wanted to attend the PGA. A committee was formed to review the applications and make recommendations. The focus was mainly on younger anesthesiologists who came from areas that might benefit most from the PGA's educational offerings.

Over the years, many suggestions were made to try to expand our financial base. The main Romanian airline, Tarom, offered reduced fares for anesthesiologists who presented their work. Many departments helped their junior members attend if they displayed posters. Some departments and pharmaceutical companies offered general financial support. The prohibitive cost of airfare was and remains the biggest challenge, however.

Today's scholars are offered shared hotel space along with free attendance at the meeting, workshop and mini-workshop tickets as they become available, and invitations to some social events. Some have even taken BLS, PALS and ACLS classes and brought these new



The 2023 international scholars take time for a photo with NYSSA leaders and volunteers.

concepts back to their home countries. An added benefit has come from the technical exhibitors, who donate books and equipment (mainly airway supplies) on the last day of the meeting, allowing the scholars to return home with much-needed equipment for their departments.

A few years ago, thanks to then-NYSSA President Dr. Paul Willoughby and a great deal of help from Stuart Hayman, our invaluable executive director, the Anesthesiology Foundation of New York (AFNY) was established, allowing tax-free donations to be made to help support this program and other educational endeavors. The AFNY board has a minimum of 12 directors and meets annually.

Since its inception, the International Scholars Program has hosted more than 400 scholars from 60+ countries at the PGA. Guatemala was represented for the first time recently, and the youngest country represented was North Macedonia. For PGA77, we accepted 11 scholars from a large pool of applicants, several of whom were invited previously but were unable to attend due to the pandemic and long backlogs at American embassies worldwide.

As for the results of our efforts: Many attendees, on returning to their countries, have become program and residency directors, organizing specialty and board training certification. One became president of the European Society, another was appointed the surgeon general of Thailand, and yet another was elected president of the Royal College of Anesthesiologists of Thailand. Two scholars became representatives to the World Health Organization. Some have gone on to become department chairs and contributed in major ways to medical literature around the world.

Throughout the past 30 years, the NYSSA has continued to make major annual contributions to this program, and many members continue to support this undertaking as well. Additionally, the program would not have been successful without the support of the NYSSA staff, including former staff member Pat Burdette and current staff members Will Burdette and Kelly Mancusi, to name just a few.

The International Scholars Program was recognized by the American Society of Anesthesiologists in 2019 when the NYSSA was presented

with the Nicholas M. Greene, M.D., Award for Outstanding Humanitarian Contribution. I was proud to accept this award on the NYSSA's behalf.

Please help us continue this important endeavor by visiting www.afny.nyc to make your donation. ■

Elizabeth A. M. Frost, M.D., was the PGA general chair from 1997-2000. She helped create and grow the PGA International Scholars Program and was chair of the International Scholars Committee from 1993 until 2023. She is a clinical professor of anesthesiology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City.



The Anesthesiology Foundation of New York (AFNY) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve patient care around the world.

You Can Make a Difference

AFNY provides PGA-related scholarships to anesthesiologists from the developing world who wish to refine their delivery of safe, modern anesthetic care. Since 1993, more than 400 anesthesiologists representing 62 countries have enhanced their education and training thanks to the generosity of the NYSSA and its members.

You can help AFNY fund the education and research that will improve patient care around the world. Contributions are tax deductible and 100 percent of every donation will be used to fund the programs that fulfill AFNY's mission.



Visit www.afny.nyc and make your donation today.

The 40th Annual International Symposium: Clinical Update in Anesthesiology, Surgery and Perioperative Medicine

MENACHEM M. WEINER, M.D.

The 40th Annual Update in Anesthesiology, Surgery and Perioperative Medicine, organized by the Department of Anesthesiology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York, was held January 14-19, 2024, at the St. Kitts Marriott Resort, St. Kitts, West Indies. This event is designed for active professionals who wish to improve their knowledge and stay current by reviewing innovations, recent advances, and best practices in cardiothoracic, vascular and general anesthesiology, surgery, perioperative medicine, and critical care. A session on practice management is also included. The well-established international conference continues to be popular, with more than 100 participants from 12 different countries.

The symposium consisted of 75 lectures given by faculty from around the globe. Twelve of these were special lectures. To honor the founder and longtime organizer of the meeting, the inaugural Dr. George Silvay Honorary Lecture was held. This year's lecture was given by Dr. Yianni Augoustides and was followed by a reception in Dr. Silvay's honor.



Dr. Linda Shore-Lesserson teaches the echocardiography workshop.



Dr. Andrew Leibowitz, system chair of the Department of Anesthesiology, Perioperative and Pain Medicine at the Mount Sinai Health System, delivers one of the special lectures.

Complimentary workshops included transthoracic and transesophageal echocardiography, point-of-care ultrasound, and ultrasound-guided regional blocks, all of which were taught by experts in these fields. The workshops allowed the visiting physicians the opportunity to use ultrasound with live models and to benefit from bedside teaching.

The conference also included a competition for residents, fellows, and junior faculty to present interesting and complex cases or research to an international panel of experts. There were 17 international participants competing for the grand prize of complimentary registration to next year's symposium. The award for first place was presented to Dr. Viktoria König from the Medical University of Vienna for her presentation "Train Surfing Awareness and Prevention."

Mount Sinai will host the 41st Annual International Symposium: Clinical Update in Anesthesiology, Surgery and Perioperative Medicine at the Hilton Barbados Resort, Needham's Point, Barbados, from January 19-24, 2025. All are encouraged to attend the conference. Please email inquiries to Dr. Menachem Weiner at menachem.weiner@mountsinai.org. ■

Menachem M. Weiner, M.D., is the director of cardiac anesthesia and a professor of anesthesiology, perioperative and pain medicine at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai.

Legislative Update

CHARLES J. ASSINI, JR., ESQ.

New York State Healthcare Workforce

On December 19, 2023, various New York Assembly standing committees conducted a joint hearing on the status of the healthcare workforce in New York state. The NYSSA advocacy team (Dr. Ansara Vaz, Government and Legal Affairs chair; Dr. Farzana Alfroze, Government and Legal Affairs vice chair; Stuart Hayman, NYSSA executive director; Lisa ONeill, NYSSA assistant executive director; Albany lobbyist Bob Reid, Reid, McNally & Savage; and me) prepared and submitted the following written testimony.

Testimony Before the Assembly Standing Committees on Health, Mental Health, People with Disabilities, Higher Education, and Labor

Introduction

The New York State Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc. (“NYSSA”) is a medical society of approximately 4,300 physicians specializing in the field of anesthesia. The NYSSA is dedicated to advancing the specialty of anesthesiology and providing the safest, highest-quality patient care to the citizens of New York state.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony with recommendations for solutions. We believe we are offering proactive solutions to help New York state meet the challenges brought about by the demands of increased surgical volume. Our recommendations ensure that New York state’s patients will still receive the highest quality of anesthesia professional services performed by physician anesthesiologists and nurse anesthetists. We ask you to keep in mind that there are unequalled risks associated with the delivery of anesthesia. When patients encounter life-threatening emergencies requiring immediate medical intervention, it is imperative that we preserve equal access to the physician-led supervision and the safety standard that currently exists in the New York state health code (which has been in existence since 1989). The New York state health code requires the supervision of the nurse anesthetist by the physician anesthesiologist, who must be

immediately available, or the operating physician, who must accept responsibility for the nurse anesthetist.

The anesthesia workforce, consisting primarily of physician anesthesiologists and nurse anesthetists, has seen a modest increase over the past several years, according to data from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the American Medical Association (AMA) (see graph). This data confirms that New York state, unlike several other states, has a relatively stable number of physician anesthesiologists and nurse anesthetists.

Recommendations/Solutions

1. United States International Medical Graduates (IMGs), who have gone to medical school abroad, often cannot find residency spots when they have graduated. Increasing residency spots outside of CMS in rural counties of New York state would bring this valuable workforce home and bring healthcare to rural areas. New York state should also have a temporary loosening for foreign graduates (non-U.S. residents) to enter the workforce for a period of time. The American Board of Anesthesiology (ABA) now has eight spots allocated per hospital as a pathway for these physicians to get their board certification. Consideration should be given to increasing the spots even more — perhaps to 12 to 14 spots.

2. Create new physician anesthesiologist residency programs. California has adopted initiatives to support more physician anesthesiologist residency programs.

3. Increase student loan forgiveness programs.

4. In recent discussions with New York state officials, we were apprised of the possibility of creating certified anesthesiologist assistant (CAA) programs and licensure of CAAs in New York state. There are currently 21 states that recognize CAAs. CAAs work under the supervision of a physician anesthesiologist. This initiative would bring revenue to the state and open the door for additional qualified anesthesia providers, which the NYSSA supports.

5. Advance the rural “pass-through” program, which is a real, obtainable solution to bring more physician anesthesiologists to rural

hospitals. Under the rural pass-through program, Medicare permits certain low-volume, rural hospitals to pay for the services of nurse anesthetists and anesthesiologist assistants through a Medicare Part A, cost-based, “pass-through” mechanism. The mechanism is used in lieu of a Part B payment for anesthesia services. Medicare should extend this program to all anesthesia providers, including physician anesthesiologists, who are presently excluded by law from participating. The federal government can directly improve care expansion in rural and underserved areas through addressing a significant problem in anesthesiology — strengthening the anesthesia rural pass-through. New York state officials are advised to consider encouraging the federal government to strengthen the anesthesia rural pass-through.

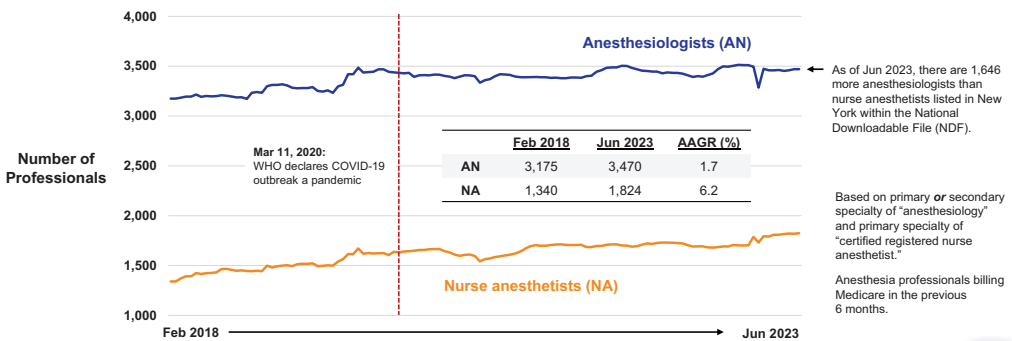
Preserving Safe Anesthesia Standards

There are challenges to maintaining and increasing the number of physician anesthesiologists and nurse anesthetists; however, careful consideration is needed when weighing any proposals that would impact patient safety. It is important to keep in mind that, despite advances in medicine, every procedure and surgery has risks. The physician-directed anesthesia care team model is defined by physician anesthesiologists and nurse anesthetists with different clinical and training skills working together for the benefit of the patient. In this model, the physician anesthesiologist, with advanced medical training and clinical experience, assumes the primary responsibility to determine, direct, and oversee the patient’s optimum medical care. This time-tested anesthesia safety standard, as set forth in the New York state health code, should not be compromised when addressing anesthesia workforce solutions. The NYSSA believes the foregoing solutions may be helpful in accomplishing the objective of increasing the anesthesia workforce while preserving the existing standard of anesthesia care.

The NYSSA cautions the committee to carefully scrutinize the impact of Executive Order No. 4 (EO 4) during the COVID pandemic as it related to the delivery of anesthesia care. It may be asserted that removing the physician supervision standard under EO 4 demonstrated that nurse anesthetists can independently administer anesthesia and that permanent extension of EO 4 would represent a viable solution to the workforce challenge. However, the facts speak otherwise:

- EO 4 did not define a nurse anesthetist’s scope of practice or authorize nurse anesthetists to prescribe (ordering anesthetic drugs required a physician’s order).
- EO 4 did not supersede medical staff bylaws that reflect New York state health code requirements to protect the health and safety of the patient in accordance with accepted standards of medical practice that includes anesthesia services be directed by a physician (qualified by education and experience) who has the responsibility for clinical aspects and organization of anesthesia services.
- EO 4 did not supersede Medicare, Medicaid and workers’ compensation billing requirements requiring physician supervision or the office-based surgical accreditation anesthesia standard of physician supervision.
- Our membership was unaware of any departure from the adherence to physician-led anesthesia care during the time EO 4 was in effect. Upon information and belief, no peer-reviewed studies have been published supporting the contention that nurse anesthetists administered anesthesia independently and safely during the time EO 4 was in effect. As such, it is our position that there is no evidence that nurse anesthetists

New York: Anesthesiologists and Nurse Anesthetists Billing Medicare, Feb 2018–Jun 2023



Source: CMS Provider Data: Doctors and Clinicians, National Downloadable File (NDF). Updated 06/22/2023.
 Available at <https://data.cms.gov/provider-data/dataset/mj5m-pzif6> Referred as the CMS Physician Compare National Downloadable File prior to May 2021.
 AAGR=Average annual growth rate
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practiced independently or that nurse anesthetists' independent practice would alleviate the anesthesia workforce challenges. As of June 2023, there were 1,824 nurse anesthetists and 3,470 physician anesthesiologists in New York state (see graph). There were 1,646 more physician anesthesiologists than nurse anesthetists in the state.

According to a recent study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, evidence demonstrates that administrative or policy decisions that force reduction of physician anesthesiologists' involvement will result in patient harm. (Burns ML, et al. Association of anesthesiologist staffing ratio with surgical patient morbidity and mortality. *JAMA Surg* 2022; 157(9):807-815. doi:10.1001/jamasurg.2022.2804.)

We appreciate your consideration of our views. Thank you. ■

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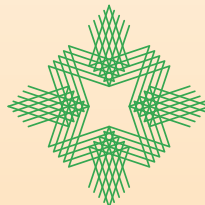
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