The administration of anesthesia is a complex and technically demanding medical procedure that requires physician supervision. In order to protect patient safety, physician anesthesiologists must lead anesthesia care.

Physician Anesthesiologists Protect Patient Safety and Ensure Quality of Care

Physician anesthesiologists are the patient's personal internist and critical care specialist all in one – providing the highest level of care before, during and after surgery. Physician anesthesiologists have been the leaders in patient safety, being the only medical specialty cited for having significantly improved patient safety.¹

Mid-level anesthesiology practitioners are an important part of the health care system, but they must have physician direction and supervision. Expanding mid-level practitioner scope of practice without proper physician involvement can lead to increased costs due to over-utilization of tests, over-prescribing medications and excess referrals to specialists. As more Californians enter the healthcare system, an integrated physician-led model will help ensure that there is access to cost effective and high quality healthcare.

Anesthesiologist Assistants Need to Play a Role in Anesthesia Care in California

Anesthesiologist Assistants (AAs) are highly skilled healthcare professionals who work under the direction of physician anesthesiologists to implement anesthesia care plans. In order to become an anesthesiologist assistant, students with a pre-medical undergraduate background must complete a Master's-level program which includes a minimum of 2,000 clinical hours.

While AAs are an important part of physician led anesthesia care, today AAs can only work in 16 states and the District of Columbia.² There are no anesthesiologist assistants currently working in California, because the state has not authorized AA practice. Physician anesthesiologists typically direct two or more AAs at the same time so the shared skills, knowledge, and vigilance of the team allow for high-quality patient care.

Physician led anesthesia care can include both physicians and non-physicians. Although selected tasks of overall anesthesia care may be performed by qualified providers, supervision and overall responsibility for patient safety and well-being always rests with the physician anesthesiologist.

Physicians:
- Anesthesiologist
- Anesthesiology Fellow
- Anesthesiology Resident

Non-physicians:
- Anesthesiologist Assistant
- Nurse Anesthetist
- Student

CSA is the Leader on Anesthesiology Issues

The California Society of Anesthesiologists (CSA) is a non-profit physician organization which advocates for patient safety and promotes the highest standards in the profession of anesthesia. CSA has approximately 4,000 members throughout California and is the largest component society to the American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA).

1. To Err is Human. Institute of Medicine, 1999
2. American Academy of Anesthesiologist Assistants