

Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist vs. Anesthesiologist Assistant: A Comprehensive Review of Similarities and Differences



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PROBLEM

With increasing efforts to decrease the cost of healthcare combined with a shortage of anesthesia providers, non-physician providers are utilized more frequently than ever before (Greenwood & Biddle, 2015; Hogan, Seifert, Moore, & Simonson, 2010). This has presented a problem as non-physician anesthesia providers compete for employment opportunities with similar job descriptions, yet have different clinical backgrounds, program admission requirements, and scopes of practice. In some settings, CRNAs and AAs are more commonly referred to as interchangeable, leaving many healthcare providers unaware of the distinct differences between the two professions (American Society of Anesthesiologists, 2013).

LITERATURE REVIEW

While CRNAs and AAs do share some similarities, important differences exist that distinguish these non-physician anesthesia providers into two unique professions. Differences among educational pathways, scope of practice, and government policies are evident. Primary aspects about CRNAs that are different from AAs include:

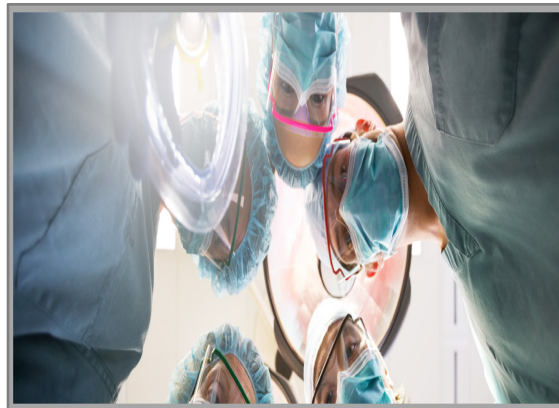
- Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (licensure in every state)
- Background in critical care
- Prescriptive authority (process varies by state)
- Independent practice (to include regional anesthesia administration)
- Ability to work anywhere in the United States

OBJECTIVE

The goal of this project was to increase the knowledge of Student Registered Nurse Anesthetists (SRNAs) regarding the similarities and differences among CRNAs and AAs.

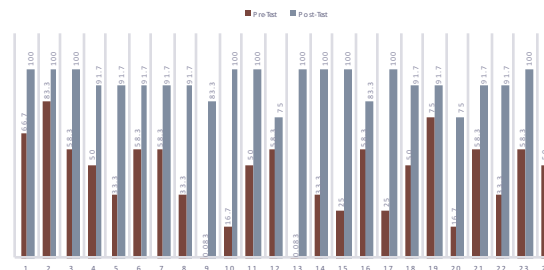
METHODOLOGY

A PowerPoint presentation describing the similarities and differences that exist among CRNAs and AAs was prepared and presented to a convenience sample of 24 senior SRNAs currently enrolled at Adventist University of Health Sciences. A pre and post test was administered and scores were analyzed using SPSS.



RESULTS

STUDENT REGISTERED NURSE ANESTHETISTS' TEST SCORES



ANALYSIS

A paired samples t test was conducted to analyze the data collected from pre and post test scores. The obtained t value is -10.723 ($p < .001$) which is statistically significant. It therefore can be concluded that the mean percentage scores increased significantly following the PowerPoint presentation.

Paired Samples Statistics				
	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 VAR00001	43.7444	24	21.9970	4.48883
VAR00002	59.4125	24	7.76365	1.58475

Paired Samples Test					
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Paired Differences		t
			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		df
			Lower	Upper	
Pair 1 VAR00001 - VAR00002	-15.6681	22.69225	-4.63204	-26.70426	-10.723
					23
					.000

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, as demonstrated by the statistical analysis of pre and post tests, the PowerPoint presentation was successful in increasing the knowledge among 24 SRNAs about the similarities and differences of CRNAs and AAs.

IMPACT ON FINDINGS

Results from this study revealed that a small group of healthcare providers had a general lack of understanding of the similarities and differences among CRNAs and AAs. As evidenced by analysis of pre and post test scores, more education regarding these two similar, yet different professions is needed among healthcare providers and those who employ them. Understanding and respecting the differences between CRNAs and AAs is a step in providing patients with safe and accessible anesthesia care.

REFERENCES

Available upon request.