

ANESTHESIOLOGY IN THE NEWS

ASA members offer up perspectives and solutions to opioid crisis

In December, Myles Gart, M.D., wrote an article for KevinMD.com explaining why teens are more vulnerable to opioid addiction. “The younger you are when you are exposed to opioids, the higher the likelihood of addiction later in life. It is therefore paramount that we avoid the use of opioids or drastically restrict their use in this population,” said Dr. Gart.

Also in December, Halena M. Gazelka, M.D.’s experience on a panel at the U.S. News & World Report’s annual Healthcare of Tomorrow conference was highlighted in a Healio.com article. She explained how being on a panel focused on combatting opioids allows health care professionals to see what other organizations are doing to combat the crisis.

Anita Gupta, D.O., Pharm. D., FASA, was quoted by Reuters Health in February regarding a study that found more than half of opioid prescriptions written by dentists between 2011-2015 exceeded government guidelines for treating pain associated with dental procedures.

Edward Mariano, M.D., ASA Committee on Regional Anesthesia and Acute Pain Medicine chair, wrote an article in Outpatient Surgery advocating for the use of regional anesthesia. “The problem is, regional anesthesia is not yet performed by the majority of anesthesia practitioners on a regular basis. Nerve blocks are used in a mere 3% of surgeries,” said Dr. Mariano.

Jonathan Hisghman, D.O., was quoted in the Laker and Lutz News (Tampa, Florida) in an article on how his medical center has adopted an opioid-free anesthesiology program to avoid exposing patients to opioids’ addictive risks, reduce pain and shorten recovery time. “This is not an abandonment of pain relief – but a new solution to stop the pain at the source,” said Dr. Hisghman.

Surprise medical bills continue to make headlines

In December, WPBF-TV (West Palm Beach, Florida) ran a segment offering advice to patients who receive an out-of-network bill, that featured ASA’s support of legislation that holds patients harmless from surprise bills. Op-eds in support of legislation that would allow independent dispute resolution for these bills were written for the Central Florida Post (Clearwater) by Jay H. Epstein, M.D., FASA, an in The Floridian (Palm Beach County), by Asha Padmanabhan, M.D., FASA, and Leopoldo V. Rodriguez, M.D., FASA.

Additionally, Antonio Hernandez Conte, M.D., FASA, shared his thoughts about California’s surprise billing law in a Kaiser Health News article, which was also featured on ABCNews.com and The Fresno Bee (California).

In January, ASA President Mary Dale Peterson, M.D., MSCHA, FACHE, FASA, was quoted in a Modern Healthcare article that discussed the House-Senate compromise on surprise medical billing legislation. She also submitted a letter to the editor to the Washington Post in support of H.R. 3502, the “Protecting People from Surprise Medical Bills Act.” Dr. Peterson was then quoted in The Hill in February in an article on ASA’s opposition of the Lower Health Care Costs proposal. “The proposed legislation is “essentially pandering to the big insurance companies by giving them too much leverage to lower doctors’ payment rates,” she said.

Promising advances in anesthesia explored by health care media outlets

ASA Past President Daniel J. Cole, M.D., FASA, weighed in on the use of hypnosis in place of general anesthesia for minor surgeries in the December issue of Elemental magazine. “Hypnosis, in and of itself, is probably not something that I would use as the sole anesthetic for something like a hip replacement surgery. It would be more used for minor-type surgeries.”

Also in December, KevinMD.com interviewed Berend Mets, CH.B., Ph.D., M.B., FCMSA, FRCA, about the global anesthesia crisis and his experience training physician anesthesiologists in Guyana.

In its January newsletter, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) quoted George Mashour, M.D., Ph.D., in the article “Going Under: A Closer Look at Anesthesia,” which discussed the different types of anesthesia used, how advances have made anesthesia safer and some of the associated risks.

A February Modern Healthcare article looked at the safety of spinal anesthesia for babies and how it is being used at one New Hampshire hospital during complex procedures. ASA Educational Track Subcommittee on Pediatric Anesthesia Chair Mary Ellen McCann, M.D., and Charles Eastwood, M.D., were both quoted. “We are doing this at a community hospital and showing this is a feasible, safe, effective technique. There is no reason why it couldn’t be adopted any place that was motivated to do so,” said Dr. Eastwood.

ASA members focus on brain health research

The Wall Street Journal featured Lee A. Fleisher, M.D., chair of ASA's Ad Hoc Committee on Perioperative Brain Health Initiative, in a December article on postoperative delirium and cognitive decline. "Older patients considering an elective surgery should have a geriatrician give them a cognitive screening. If the results show cognitive impairment, patients should weigh the risks and benefits of the surgery," he said.

In January, Anesthesiology News quoted Justyne Decker, M.D., and Carol Peden, M.D., on research presented at the ANESTHESIOLOGY® 2019 annual meeting regarding the Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California perioperative care pathway. Daniel I. McIsaac, M.D., M.P.H., was also quoted in the article stating, "The team at USC has demonstrated that they can routinely conduct neurocognitive screening before surgery and engage a multidisciplinary team."

Scope of practice issues arise in multiple states

WTSP-TV (Tampa) interviewed Jay H. Epstein, M.D., FASA, in January regarding HB 607, which would allow nurse anesthetists to administer anesthesia without physician oversight. "The benefit of having a physician anesthesiologist or a physician involved in some manner with anesthetics has been proven over time in terms of rescue," Dr. Epstein said.

This February, South Dakota Society of Anesthesiologists President James Brunz, M.D., wrote a letter to the editor explaining his opposition to Senate Bill 50, which would allow nurse anesthetists to administer anesthesia, prescribe opioids and perform intricate pain medicine procedures without physician supervision. "Allowing untrained nurses to perform these types of procedures in the name of rural access in small community hospitals seems reckless at best, and puts the people of South Dakota at unnecessary risk," said Dr. Brunz.

ASA President featured in hometown magazine

The Bend Magazine (Corpus Christi, Texas) profiled Mary Dale Peterson, M.D., MSCHA, FACHE, FASA, and her new tenure as ASA president in January. The article said, "Dr. Peterson has undoubtedly become one of the key players in our health and medical world here in the Coastal Bend and her achievements prove the type of talent our local community has to offer."

Physician anesthesiologist named 'best job'

In January, U.S. News & World Report ranked physician anesthesiologists #17 on their "25 Best Jobs of 2020" list. In the slideshow, ASA President Mary Dale Peterson, M.D., MSCHA, FACHE, FASA, explained how physician anesthesiologists track a patient's vital signs during surgery.

Physician Anesthesiologists Week highlights

In conjunction with Physician Anesthesiologists Week 2020 (January 26-February 1), ASA joined forces with U.S. Surgeon General, VADM, Jerome Adams, M.D., M.P.H., to empower the public to recognize the signs of an overdose or alcohol poisoning and how to respond to these medical emergencies.

A news release, which quoted ASA President Mary Dale Peterson, M.D., MSHCA, FACHE, FASA, discussing the need for greater access to naloxone and safe and effective pain management was featured on U.S. News & World Report and nearly 70 network affiliate television stations across the country, including WRC-TV in Washington, D.C. A mat release (a feature article that appears in newspapers or online to complement staff-written material) on the topic ran in 1,118 news outlets, including the Houston Chronicle, San Francisco Chronicle and Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

KRIS-TV (NBC; Corpus Christi) featured ASA President Mary Dale Peterson, M.D., MSHCA, FACHE, FASA, in their special report regarding the opioid crisis happening in Corpus Christi and the need for community members to know the signs of overdose. "If you can identify an overdose or alcohol poisoning, you are more likely to react quickly making the difference between life and death for a family member, friend or stranger," said Dr. Peterson.

ASA Assistant Secretary Kraig de Lanzac, M.D., FASA, was featured on WGMB-TV (FOX; Baton Rouge, Louisiana) in a live morning show segment where he discussed how to recognize and respond to an overdose. "When seconds count, all of us can save a life when it comes to an opioid overdose," he said. An accompanying online article included video of ASA President Mary Dale Peterson, M.D., MSHCA, FACHE, FASA, sharing information on how the community can help end the epidemic by acting as first responders and carrying naloxone.

Also, during Physician Anesthesiologists Week, The Gillette News Record (Gillette, Wyoming) published a letter to the editor by Wyoming Society of Anesthesiologists President John Mansell, M.D., FASA, where he highlighted the important role physician anesthesiologists have during emergencies including trauma, critical care and obstetrics.