



JAMES L. MADARA, MD  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, CEO

ama-assn.org  
t (312) 464-5000

January 28, 2020

Russell S. Barron, MBA  
Executive Director  
Idaho Board of Nursing  
280 N 8th St, #210  
Boise, ID 83702

Re: Idaho Board of Nursing Consideration of the Title “Nurse Anesthesiologist”

Dear Mr. Barron:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and medical student members, I write to express our **strong opposition** to the Idaho Board of Nursing (IBN) consideration of the use of the title “nurse anesthesiologist” or “certified nurse anesthesiologist” for Idaho Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs). As stated in our previous letter dated October 10, 2019, while the AMA believes there is an increased need for clarity and transparency in health care today, we strongly oppose allowing CRNAs to refer to themselves as “nurse anesthesiologists,” which is both misleading and confusing to patients and does not further the IBN’s mission to protect the health, safety and public welfare of the people of Idaho.

With the proliferation of health professionals with varying levels of education and training, it is more important than ever for the titles used by members of the health care team to be easily recognizable by patients. Anesthesiology is a physician specialty and the title “anesthesiologist” has always been used solely by physicians. There is much confusion among the public today about who is providing one’s health care, **yet patients recognize the distinction between the terms “anesthesiologist” and “nurse anesthetist.”** In fact, in our recent study looking at patient understanding of who is providing their care, 70 percent of patients said an anesthesiologist was a physician and 71 percent identified a nurse anesthetist as **not** being a physician. In our view, patients clearly understand that anesthesiologists and nurse anesthetists are two different types of provider on the health care team and this is a very good thing.

In fact, we believe that allowing CRNAs to use the term “anesthesiologist” in their title will create unnecessary confusion for patients. As you are aware, “certified registered nurse anesthetist” is the common term used across the country to refer to CRNAs. Moreover, even the certifying body and organizations overseeing CRNAs all use the term “nurse anesthetist.” Allowing CRNAs to use the term “nurse anesthesiologist” does not provide much needed clarity or transparency.

Mr. Russell S. Barron, MBA  
January 28, 2020  
Page 2

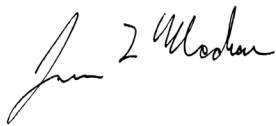
Instead, it muddies the water. This is concerning because we are at a time in the evolution of health care when patients are being expected to play a greater role in their health care decision-making. Our mutual goal should be to provide more clarity and transparency, not less.

Finally, it is undeniable that there is a clear difference in the education and training of anesthesiologists and CRNAs. Anesthesiologists complete four years of medical school plus a four-year residency, including 15,000 hours of clinical training, while CRNAs complete two to three years of graduate level education and approximately 2,500 hours of clinical training. Given this stark difference, patients have the right to know who is providing their medical care.

For these reasons, we strongly urge you to put patients at the center of this debate and not authorize CRNAs to refer to themselves as “nurse anesthesiologists.”

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our input. Please contact Kimberly Horvath, JD, Senior Legislative Attorney, AMA Advocacy Resource Center, at [kimberly.horvath@ama-assn.org](mailto:kimberly.horvath@ama-assn.org) or (312) 464-4783 with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim L. Madara". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "M".

James L. Madara, MD

cc: Beth Martin, MD, President, Idaho Medical Association  
Susie Pouliot, Chief Executive Officer, Idaho Medical Association  
Jesse Ehrenfeld, MD, MPH, Chair, AMA Board of Trustees