

## Nurse Anesthetist

### ■ Job Description

The chief responsibility of the nurse anesthetist is the administration of drugs and gases to produce anesthesia and analgesia in a variety of settings. The nurse anesthetist assists in preoperative and postoperative care of the patient, and in the management of respiratory problems in ancillary departments, helping to educate other hospital staff regarding airway management. This specialty demands nurses with considerable skills and dedication to the team concept of anesthesia care. The anesthetist must also have the ability to work independently.

### ■ Job Settings

Although anesthesia is usually administered in the operating room, the nurse anesthetist also works in multiple ancillary departments, emergency rooms (including ambulance runs), and dental offices. Nurse anesthetists are the only anesthesia providers in 85 percent of rural hospitals, according to the Illinois Association of Nurse Anesthetists.

### ■ Projected Need

Nationally, the number of jobs for all registered nurses is expected to increase faster than average through 2010. In Illinois, registered nurse is one of the 10 occupations expected to provide the most job openings each year. Technological advances that allow more medical problems to be treated and the increasing elderly population will contribute to the need for nurse anesthetists.

Also, with the continuing trend of cutting costs in health care facilities, nurse anesthetists will be in demand to provide an alternative to hiring higher paid anesthesiologists.

Nurses with specialized skills and advanced knowledge of anesthetics can expect to find opportunities in a variety of settings.

In Illinois, there are over 700 nurse anesthetists employed in this very small occupation, according to the Illinois Association of Nurse Anesthetists.

### ■ Salaries

Reflecting the level of responsibility, nurse anesthetists are one of the highest paid nursing

specialties. Nationally, the median annual income for a certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA) in 2001 was approximately \$113,000 based on an American Association of Nurse Anesthetists Membership Survey.

According to the Year 2000 Survey of Registered Nurses in Illinois, 92% of the nurse anesthetists surveyed reported earning an annual salary over \$75,000 with 51% earning between \$100,000 and \$150,000 per year.

### ■ Related Careers

Respiratory therapists also administer gases. Medical-surgical nurses and surgical technologists also work in operating rooms.

### ■ Differences in Training

Admission to nurse anesthesia educational programs requires graduation from an approved school of nursing, a BSN or other appropriate bachelor's degree, current licensure as a registered professional nurse and a minimum of 1 year of professional nursing experience in an acute care setting. Nurse anesthesia educational programs are 24 to 36 months of graduate course work including both classroom and clinical experience. The total number of anesthesia programs in the United States is less than ninety.

Programs in Illinois are located at the Rush University Nurse Anesthesia Program in Chicago, Decatur Memorial Hospital's Nurse Anesthesia Program in Decatur, Evanston Northwestern Healthcare School of Anesthesia in Evanston and at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville School of Nursing.

### ■ Related Educational Programs

The programs of study listed below are the recommended areas of study to pursue for this occupation. Clicking on these will lead to files that show in-state and national schools that offer these programs.

*The following link(s) will take you to CIS for more information. CIS requires an ID and password that can be obtained at <http://cis.ilworkinfo.com/loginhelp/> You must log into CIS prior to clicking on the links below.*

[Nurse Anesthetist](#)  
[Registered Nursing](#)

■ **Credentials**

This specialty in nursing is similar to specialties in medicine in that state licensing is obtained by completing an approved course in nursing and passing the board exam. Certification is then obtained by passing a qualifying exam from the Council on Certification of the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists, with the title Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) being conferred. Recertification is required every two years in nursing and anesthesia and includes the completion of continuing education units.

■ **Advanced Training**

There are several BS and MS degree programs offering advanced training in anesthesiology nationwide.

■ **Resources**

American Association of Nurse Anesthetists  
222 South Prospect Avenue  
Park Ridge, IL 60068-4001  
Phone: 847.692.7050  
E-mail: [info@aana.com](mailto:info@aana.com)  
<http://www.aana.com>  
Click on "About AANA" then select "What is a Nurse Anesthetist?"

The association awards scholarships to association members who have completed one year of course work in an accredited CRNA program.

Illinois Association of Nurse Anesthetists  
825 W. State Street, Suite 207  
Geneva, IL 60134  
Phone: 630.232.2212  
<http://www.ilcrna.com>