

Anaesthesia Associates (AAs)

Information for patients

Anaesthesia Associates (AAs): information for patients

'Anaesthesia associates (previously known as physicians' assistants (anaesthesia)) are part of the multi-disciplinary anaesthesia team, led by a consultant anaesthetist, that looks after patients undergoing many aspects of critical care.'

NHS Health Careers 2019 (bit.ly/2voQiAj)

Introduction

Physicians' assistant (anaesthesia) [PA(A)s] were introduced in 2004. In July 2019 PA(A)s formally changed their name to Anaesthesia Associates (AAs), recognising their role within the anaesthesia team and also within medical associate professions. AAs are trained healthcare professionals who are members of the multidisciplinary anaesthetic team in some hospitals. This leaflet explains who they are, how they are trained and where you may meet them in your hospital.

How are AAs trained?

AAs hold either a science degree or have training and experience as a healthcare professional. They then follow a two-year course to gain a national diploma in the practice of anaesthesia. During this time they are trained by consultant anaesthetists, who are fully qualified doctors with specialist training in anaesthesia. AA training is mostly within a hospital. They work alongside consultant anaesthetists who continually support and assess them. The diploma is university-based and recognised by the Royal College of Anaesthetists.

How do AAs contribute to the anaesthesia team?

This role has come about to help anaesthesia teams in hospitals work more flexibly.

The introduction into the NHS of the AA role within the multidisciplinary anaesthesia team increases the workforce and can mean that in some hospitals more operations can be performed safely by allowing consultants to take responsibility for two patients at the same time. The consultant anaesthetist supervises the whole team, including AAs, to ensure that the highest standards of care are maintained for all patients. AAs can also help assess patients arriving for surgery at different times throughout the day so that delays are minimised. A voluntary register of trained AAs is kept by the Royal College of Anaesthetists.

How is an AA involved in my care?

AAs always work under the close supervision of a consultant anaesthetist, who will be responsible for your anaesthesia care at all times.

Both the consultant anaesthetist and AA will be with you at the start and at other significant times of your anaesthetic. The consultant will remain in the theatre suite. They will be supervising no more than two AAs at any one time in different theatres, and will never be more than two minutes away.

You may meet an AA at any stage of your anaesthetic care and they may:

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- assess you before the operation to check your health and to discuss your care during and after your surgery. After discussing any choices with you, they will plan your anaesthetic care and agree this plan with the consultant anaesthetist who oversees and is responsible for your care
- give your anaesthetic or sedation under the supervision of a consultant
- in some hospitals, experienced AAs, after extra training and subject to local agreement, may also perform nerve blocks or other monitoring procedures for some operations
- assess you after the operation to make sure that you are recovering well
- provide resuscitation in case of emergency.

Where can I get more information?

You can read more information on the role of the AA below:

- Association of Anaesthesia Associates (AAA) website: www.anaesthesiateam.com
- Royal College of Anaesthetists' website: bit.ly/2Hb1TV7
- Health Education England – Medical Associate Professions: bit.ly/2EVbrSf

Additional resources

You can find more information leaflets on the College website www.rcoa.ac.uk/patientinfo. The leaflets may also be available from the anaesthetic department or pre-assessment clinic in your hospital.

Risks associated with your anaesthetic

Leaflets about specific risks associated with having an anaesthetic or an anaesthetic procedure are also available on the College website. They supplement the patient information leaflets listed above and are available via the following link: www.rcoa.ac.uk/patientinfo



Royal College of Anaesthetists



Tell us what you think

We welcome suggestions to improve this leaflet. If you have any comments that you would like to make, please email them to patientinformation@rcoa.ac.uk

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Third Edition 2019

This leaflet will be reviewed within five years of the date of publication.

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