



BOARD OF REGISTERED NURSING  
107 SOUTH BROADWAY, SUITE 8026  
LOS ANGELES, CA 90012



October 11, 1988

TO: Interested Persons

FROM: Board of Registered Nursing

SUBJECT: Practice of the CRNA

The Nursing Practice Act authorizes the certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA) to provide anesthesia services ordered by a physician, dentist or podiatrist, in accord with community practice and policies of the organized health care system in which the service is provided. Anesthesia services include regional or local anesthesia by injection as well as general anesthesia.

In understanding the practice of the CRNA it is helpful to recognize that performing surgery and performing anesthesia, although collaborative, are separate functions. The surgeon is responsible for performing the surgery and evaluating the patient's response to the surgical procedure, while the CRNA is responsible for selecting and administering the anesthetic agent and monitoring the patient's response thereto.

In accord with policies of the employer the CRNA may initiate orders to RNs and other appropriate staff as required to provide preoperative and postoperative care related to the anesthesia experience. The Board of Registered Nursing has no requirement for the signature of the patient's physician, dentist or podiatrist on such orders since CRNA performance of this function is common and accepted practice.

Just prior to surgery the CRNA performs a preanesthesia evaluation of the patient's condition.

In regard to discharging the patient from an outpatient facility, following surgery the physician evaluates the patient's condition at that time and determines whether or not the patient may be discharged; the CRNA later makes a decision regarding the time of discharge based on the patient's recovery from anesthesia as well as on the CRNA's determination that the patient's condition in response to the surgical procedure has remained stable. When both responses are satisfactory the CRNA discharges the patient.

In the acute care facility the CRNA evaluates the patient's responses to surgery and anesthesia to determine when the patient may be discharged from the recovery room to a nursing unit.