NURSE ANESTHETIST

Introduction

In South Africa, anesthesia is only administered by medical practitioners, which is in line with their scope of practice. The practice has never been in line with South African nursing practice. For patients, anesthesia offers freedom from pain and facilitates medical treatments from the most common to the lifesaving. Doctor to patient ratio in South Africa is usually 55 to 100 000 patients which varies from province to province and given situations. The above situation is only a third compared to developed countries. In the United States, nurse anesthetists were among the first providers of anesthesia and have been administering it successfully for more than 100 years. The introduction of nurse anesthetist in South Africa would bring more relief to the already understaffed and overworked medical practitioners.

Definition of key words

A nurse anesthetist is a nurse who specializes in the administration of anesthesia

DENOSA notes that:

- There is a shortage of nurse anesthetists in South Africa compared to other countries such as the USA
- There is a need to train more of this cadre in order to complement the overburdened medical practitioners
- There is a lack of a clear scope of practice for nurse anesthetists since it is only administered by medical doctors in South Africa

DENOSA believes that:

- The introduction of this cadre will give effect to Chapter 2, Section 34 (1 – 2) of the Nursing Act No 33, of 2005.
- The introduction of this cadre will give effect to post-basic qualifications listed in Government Notice R212.
- The introduction of this cadre will invoke the implementation of Public Health and Social Development Sectoral Bargaining Council (PHSDSBC) Resolution 3 of 2007, section 3 (3.1.3.1).
- That this cadre will bring relief to overburdened medical practitioners whilst contributing positively to the welfare of patients.
• That this cadre will open a route and precedence to other vertical career paths in the field of nurse specialists.

DENOSA position on Nurse Anesthetist:

• DENOSA supports the introduction of this cadre as key to the advancement of the nursing profession.
• The cadre should be introduced at the level of Master of Science in Nursing.
• Training may be piloted and later introduced to other institutions for easy access by any qualifying nurse.
• Well defined scope of practice should guide the practice of a nurse anesthetist.
• The specialist path and opportunities should allow further upward mobility at the bedside nursing, i.e. Doctorate level.

Conclusion
Given that the medical discipline offers an opportunity for specialization, the nursing curriculum should also be designed such that it also provides room for specialization in various nursing fields. Nurse anesthetists would be one of these specialty fields. This should go hand-in-hand with a clearly defined scope of practice that would guide and prescribe the day-to-day operations of this nursing cadre.

References
American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (www.aana.com)


PHSDSBC Resolution 3 of 2007 – Agreement on the Implementation of an Occupational Specific Dispensation (OSD) for Nurses.

Government Notice R212

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nurse_anesthesia

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