

WFSA Vision: Universal Access to Safe Anaesthesia

WFSA Position Statement on Anaesthesiology and Universal Health Coverage Adopted by Extraordinary Resolution

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At the World Congress of Anaesthesiologists, held in Hong Kong in 2016, an initial draft proposal for an “WFSA Position Statement” was presented and subsequently circulated to 150 member societies for input. Reformulated based on that input, the statement presents the WFSA’s global position. Meant to be succinct, it does not prescribe a solution for any one country to follow – recognizing that there is no “one size fits all.” It does aim to ensure that leadership in anesthesiology rests firmly with anesthesiologists, demonstrating that we as a specialist medical profession are a serious, essential and committed contributor to the world’s goal of achieving universal health coverage by 2030. The draft was submitted to all 150 member societies for approval by extraordinary resolution before May 2, 2017, so the WFSA – an official liaison to the World Health Organization – could disseminate this position statement widely before the World Health Assembly held annually in Geneva in late May.

Eighty-five member countries voted in favor of the resolution – none against – well exceeding the quorum of 40 required for adoption. The statement is provided below for all to read:

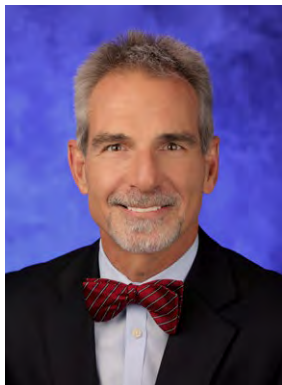
The World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists is a non-profit organisation representing anaesthesiologists in 150 countries. It exists to improve patient care and access to safe anaesthesia worldwide; this mission directly contributes to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goal 3 which aims to achieve Universal Health Coverage by 2030.

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Anaesthesiology is the medical science and practice of anaesthesia. It includes anaesthesia for surgical, obstetric and trauma care, and areas of practice such as perioperative medicine, pain medicine, resuscitation, and intensive care medicine.

An anaesthesiologist is a qualified physician who has completed a nationally recognized specialist training programme in anaesthesiology. In some countries, the term anaesthetist is used instead of anaesthesiologist.

There is an urgent need to address deficiencies in access to safe anaesthesia care.¹ An additional 1.27 million surgical, obstetric and anaesthesia providers will be required by 2030 to achieve Universal Health Coverage.² In many countries, particularly those with limited resources, anaesthesia is associated with unacceptably high mortality rates. Training and ongoing maintenance of standards are essential for increasing the number of providers and increasing the safety of anaesthesia for patients worldwide.



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In some countries, the anaesthesia need will be met by training anaesthesiologists. In other countries, especially those with limited resources, the need may, in part, be met by training non-anaesthesiologist providers.

Anaesthesia is complex and potentially hazardous, and optimal patient care depends on anaesthesia being provided, led or overseen by an anaesthesiologist. The WFSA recognises that effective teamwork is a vital component of patient safety.

The WFSA, representing anaesthesiologists worldwide, and in official relations with the World Health Organisation, is well positioned to lead the development of standards and implementation of safe, universal anaesthesia coverage. Effective development and oversight of anaesthesia services will require anaesthesiologist leadership at governmental, organisational, academic, teaching and clinical levels.

The WSFA is committed to working with governments and non-governmental organisations to improve patient care and access to safe anaesthesia worldwide. Anaesthesiologist-led development of anaesthesia services is vital if we are to achieve Universal Health Coverage by 2030.

ASA is a prominent and proud member of the World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists, and the WFSA is all the better for the good offices of ASA member involvement. Please get involved by signing up as an individual to the SAFE-T campaign (www.wfsahq.org/get-involved/safe-t). The WFSA annual review report is available at www.wfsahq.org.

References:

1. World Health Assembly. Strengthening emergency and essential surgical care and anaesthesia as a component of universal health coverage. WHA68.15. http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwaha/pdf_files/WHA68/A68_R15-en.pdf. Published May 26, 2015. Last accessed July 17, 2017.
2. Meara JG, Leather AJ, Hagander L, et al. Global Surgery 2030: evidence and solutions for achieving health, welfare, and economic development. *Lancet*. 2015;386(9993):569-624.

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