

STATEMENT ON DISTRACTIONS

**Committee of Origin: Committee on Quality Management and
Departmental Administration (QMDA)**

(Approved by the ASA House of Delegates on October 28, 2015)

Anesthesiologists have the responsibility to maintain their utmost vigilance in order to place their patient's interests foremost and protect their patients from exposure to undue risk. Part of patient care includes managing the working environment to control and when possible eliminate distractions that reduce appropriate attention to the patient within the anesthesia care environment.

Distractions have the potential to jeopardize patient safety. Attention and vigilance are a complex issue that can be compromised by an infinite variety of possible sources of distraction. These distractions can be directly created by the anesthesiologist, by other personnel involved in the patient's care, or any piece of equipment where care is provided. Anesthesiologists have a professional obligation to minimize the risks of avoidable or unavoidable distractions diverting their attention from the care of their patients. This is both a collective and individual obligation of all those participating in the procedure.

Anesthesia groups and departments should work within their organizational structures to develop and implement mechanisms, such as policies and procedures, to address the impact of distractions on the safe delivery of patient care. Given the multi-factorial nature of distraction, policies should be developed locally to allow for flexibility based on the group or facility's unique circumstances.

Education about distraction and mitigation strategies can increase an organization's and individual's self-awareness and also provide tools to engage effective responses at both the individual, group or organization levels. It may be useful to review recommendations from relevant medical and nonmedical sources when creating policies on distractions. These sources may include accrediting bodies and governmental agencies concerned about safety in distraction impacted situations.

Ongoing research into the impact of distractions on quality of care through peer review or other venues that measure anesthesia quality are encouraged to facilitate broad participation, continuous monitoring, and quality improvement.