# A Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist



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#### What are the education requirements to become a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist?

The requirements as of October 2002 are as follows: you must have a BS in Nursing from an accredited school, a minimum overall undergraduate GPA of 2.8, posses a current and valid registered nursing license, a minimum of one year care experience (ICU, CCU, NICU, OR, ER, PACU are examples of acute care), and a minimum combined score of 1350 on the GRE (Graduate Records Examination) or a 450 on the GMAT (Graduate Management Admissions Test).

# What were the education requirements for you to become a CRNA?

The requirements twenty something years ago to be admitted to a nurse anesthetist school was not as difficult as it is today. You needed to have a diploma or degree in nursing, some nursing experience but it was not required.

#### Where did you complete your educational preparation?

For nursing school I attended Holzer in Gallipolis, Ohio. I attended Charleston Memorial Hospital for the CRNA training.

# How often do you have to renew your license?

The license has to be renewed each year.

# What kind of continuing education is involved in maintaining current licensure?

Forty hours of CEU's (Continuing Education Units) every 2 years for anesthesia certification. Thirty hours every two years are needed for RN's and the nursing board accepts credits accumulated for anesthesia certification. Therefore, the CRNA only has to accumulate a total of forty hours. These hours are obtained through workshops and conferences throughout the year.

# What is a CRNA's job description?

It depends on whether you work for a hospital or a group. I am employed by a physician's group which also employs nurse anesthetists. They cover three hospitals in the area; Thomas Memorial, St. Francis and Putnam General Hospital. My responsibilities consist of prepping patients for surgery from an anesthesia point of view and I am assigned a case room for that day. I stay with each patient until surgery is over. The patient is transported to the PACU (Post Anesthesia Care Unit) until he/she can be admitted to a floor bed or be discharged to short stay until s/he can go home. There is a lot of paperwork to be completed; everything that I do to or for a patient has to be documented such as medication given or observed vital signs.

#### Are you under the supervision of a physician while you are putting patients to sleep?

Yes, we (anesthesiologist and the nurse anesthetist) work together as a team. The nurse anesthetist is supervised by a anesthesiologist. He/she is not present during the whole operation. The CRNA can call upon the anesthesiologist if problems arise. There is an enormous amount of trust and confidence in the partnership.

#### What are the positive aspects of your job?

In a way, I can be my own boss and I like that! I decide what agents (medications) to use unless there is a critical care patient. In this situation, the anesthesia doctor and I discuss the appropriate treatment to be given. And of course, the satisfaction of saving a patients life during a critical time.

# What are the negative aspects of your job?

The long hours we work because of the shortage of nurse anesthetists. We generally get no breaks or lunch. We work anywhere from 40 to 80 hours a week. Once you are over forty hours the rest is on call hours. This is when we have to spend the night at the hospital. You are always waiting for the phone to ring and you never know what kind of case awaits you. There is no family time during call weeks and people with kids miss a lot of their children's activities.

#### What is the market demand for CRNA's?

The market demand is excellent for CRNA's and Anesthesiologists. There is a shortage nationwide and especially here in WV due to the increased insurance premiums for malpractice insurance.

#### How demanding is your job?

Depends on how busy the case load is for that day.

# Is your career as a CRNA a goal you have always had?

Yes, my mother wanted me to be a school teacher and I wanted to be a nurse. So I went to nursing school, graduated, did my rotations through the different specialties in nursing, came to my surgery rotation and loved being a circulating nurse. This lead to nurse anesthetist school and here I am today. I love what I do.

# What is the average salary for a CRNA with experience and without experience?

A graduate starts out around \$60,000 a year or better. An experienced CRNA starts around \$100,000 or better (these numbers are fairly conservative). I had received a job offer from out west and the hospital there was willing to start me off at \$180,000. I stay here because WV is my home.

### Does a CRNA have malpractice insurance and if so, who covers the cost?

Yes, it depends on their situation. CRNA's who are self employed will cover their own malpractice insurance expenses but a CRNA who is employed by a company, the company will cover the costs. In some instances a CRNA will need to obtain additional coverage to cover malpractice suits but not always.

Interviewed by Kimberly Abner for a College 101 assignment on 12/02.