



ASA is *Nothing* Without You!

Randall M. Clark, MD, FASA

I have worked with many superb anesthesiologists. They take excellent care of their patients and work diligently to support both the anesthesia group and the hospital where they practice. What could be better than that? Well, one great answer is to work to improve the profession as a whole.

Thinking broadly and giving back are part of being a professional, and ASA provides a wealth of opportunities for doing so. One of the questions I hear most frequently is how to get more involved with ASA. Unsaid in these discussions is why a person would want to do that at a time when clinical demands are greater than ever. My simple answer? Because it is needed, it is rewarding, and it is the right thing to do.

“Being a superb clinician and good citizen of your group and department is just the start of your professional life. I call setting your sights outside your immediate environment being a ‘value added’ physician. The world of medicine keeps getting more complicated and needs our efforts. We must show up, or we will suffer the consequences of not having anesthesiology input when decisions get made.”

First, a little background for my argument. We work in, I think, the best specialty in medicine. Where we currently stand did not happen by accident. It is the result of tireless effort on the part of countless clinicians, scientists, researchers, educators, leaders, and, yes, our premier professional association, the American Society of Anesthesiologists. While

individual performance is important, well-designed and well-run systems allow individuals to have their greatest impact, in our case, on behalf of our members and their patients. I think all of us agree that the success of our profession is best measured by improvements in the care we provide and the outcomes our patients experience. All of us want to make a positive difference.

I will use the role of the educator as part of my example. ASA is very much an educational organization, both in developing content and in fostering its distribution. This is not particularly revolutionary, but I believe that education does not end at the end of training. The first five years in practice are vital to our successful development as anesthesiologists, physicians, and professionals. One might argue the need for education lasts our entire career. It also seems logical that those of us later in our careers can provide invaluable support to our early-career colleagues. This is an area where ASA can and does have a huge impact.

I am especially proud of the recent ASA work in professional development. We have a relatively new committee working to address the needs of early- and mid-career anesthesiologists. I was one of the anesthesiologists who proposed that new committee, and my ability to influence its formation was greatly enhanced by my having served in the House of Delegates and on the ASA Board of Directors. In this example and in countless others, ASA provides the catalyst for combining good ideas with a great structure and the strength of 56,000 individual members.



So where do *you* start? The obvious initial answer is with service on ASA committees and editorial boards. By the time you read this, the ASA committee and editorial appointment window for 2023 will have just closed, and ASA committee chairs and officers are currently working through the applications. But this *is* an annual process. So, if you did not apply this year, plan to do so when the window reopens in November of this year. If you don't succeed in your first or second nomination, plan to do so for the following year.

The self-nomination process is simple and hugely improved over the past four years (thank you, Drs. Philip and Peterson and ASA staff). Be sure you have a colleague who will provide a reference for you through the process shown in the nomination portal.

Our component societies are an extremely important entry point into ASA leadership and committee assignments. Reach out to your state society and ask what it is currently working on and what its current needs are. Some component societies have well-established and hugely detailed committee structures. Others are run by a board of directors with small, focused committees or no committees at all. It is in the mid-size and smaller state societies where you can really make an immediate impact. Find something that interests you and dive in.

I want to be sure to point out the important role of the subspecialty societies and our ASA foundations, including the Anesthesia Quality Institute, the Foundation for Anesthesia Education and Research, the Anesthesia Patient Safety



Randall M. Clark, MD, FASA

ASA Immediate Past President, Professor of Anesthesiology (Retired), University of Colorado School of Medicine, and Pediatric Cardiac Anesthesiologist, Children's Hospital Colorado, Aurora, Colorado.

Foundation, the Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology, and the ASA Charitable Foundation. Here, too, you can have a positive impact just by stepping forward and volunteering. Subspecialty societies have flourished over the past 10-15 years, and there are countless ways to contribute in a smaller environment than ASA.

Formal medicine organizations outside of ASA need the input and expertise of anesthesiologists. Find one that suits your interests and volunteer. You will be surprised to learn how big an impact you can have on the field of medicine writ large by engaging with your physician colleagues in organizations like the American Medical Association and your state and local medical societies.

Being a superb clinician and good citizen of your group and department is just the start of your professional life. I call setting your sights outside your immediate environment being a “value added” physician. The world of medicine keeps getting more complicated and needs our efforts. We must show up, or we will suffer the consequences of not having anesthesiology input when decisions get made.

Many hesitate to get involved in organizations like ASA because they fear they do not have enough information or that their input will not be welcomed. Those concerns are misplaced and can be overcome by starting small and asking for help and feedback as you learn more about the organization and its processes. After more than 25 years with the organization, I see ASA as very much a family.

ASA exists for its members. We call it a “bottom-up” style of organization. While at times it makes management a little more complicated, I have worked during my time as a Board member and officer to reinforce this approach because I think it is the main reason why ASA has been so successful for its members. And why working in ASA leadership has been so rewarding.

There is no better time to make a difference in our profession than right now. The opportunities are endless, and the need is great. It's time to take that first step. ■