

# Holistic approach to pain management helps curb opioid overuse

September 23 2016

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The holistic approach to patient care and pain management used by Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) can help prevent opioid dependency, substance use disorder, drug overdoses and death, according to the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA). The AANA strongly supports President Obama's proclamation of Prescription Opioid and Heroin Epidemic Awareness Week (Sept.18-24, 2016).

"Many patients benefit from the appropriate use of [opioid analgesics](#) in combination with non-opioid techniques as directed by healthcare professionals such as CRNAs," said AANA President Cheryl Nimmo, DNP, MSHSA, CRNA. "Unfortunately, the United States is currently facing a terrible opioid and [heroin epidemic](#). Part of the problem is overprescribing, which can lead to drug overuse or even the sale of unused drugs on the street. It is a problem our healthcare system needs to address in a hurry."

According to the 2016 National Pain Strategy, a diverse pain management strategy combines a range of therapies that may include medical, surgical, psychological, behavioral, and integrative approaches to care. Enhanced recovery after surgery (ERAS) is one such multimodal (multiple-approach) strategy that CRNAs use to effectively manage pain from pre-procedure to post-discharge with less reliance on opioids. Techniques such as regional anesthesia, peripheral nerve blocks, non-pharmacologic approaches, and non-opioid based pharmacologic measures also help reduce opioid use and shorten hospital stays.

Research has shown that a multimodal approach to pain management can be more effective and create less risk than solely prescribing opioids to manage pain.

CRNAs are highly educated anesthesia professionals who are the hands-on providers of approximately 43 million anesthetics to patients in the United States each year. CRNAs work in every setting in which anesthesia is delivered including hospital surgical suites and obstetrical delivery rooms, critical access hospitals, ambulatory surgical centers, pain management facilities, and office-based practices providing acute and chronic [pain management](#) services.

**More information:** The AANA welcomes the national conversation on this important issue and encourages appropriate medication use. For more resources about opioids, visit: [www.aana.com/OpioidSafety](http://www.aana.com/OpioidSafety)

Also see AANA's position statement, "A Holistic Approach to Pain Management: Integrated, Multimodal, and Interdisciplinary Treatment." [www.aana.com/resources2/profes...Pain-Management.aspx](http://www.aana.com/resources2/profes...Pain-Management.aspx)

Provided by American Association of Nurse Anesthetists

Citation: Holistic approach to pain management helps curb opioid overuse (2016, September 23) retrieved 5 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-09-holistic-approach-pain-curb-opioid.html>

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