



Anesthesia Answers Toolkit

Educator discussion guide

Last modified: October 1, 2026

Purpose

To explore how health literacy and patient communication influence anesthesia care, and to reflect on how future CRNAs can use education and advocacy to promote patient safety, trust, and shared decision-making.

Discussion questions

Question 1: Understanding the challenge

Patients often receive complex healthcare information while experiencing stress, fear, or uncertainty. What barriers can make it difficult for patients to understand and participate in their care?

- + What patient factors or healthcare system factors contribute to these barriers?
- + How might stress and uncertainty affect a patient's ability to process information?
- + How might these challenges appear differently in the preoperative setting?

Question 2: Clinical application

A patient arrives for surgery who appears anxious, has limited understanding of the procedure, and does not ask many questions. How would you approach this interaction as a future CRNA?

- + What strategies could help assess understanding?
- + How would you balance providing necessary information with avoiding information overload?
- + What signs might indicate that a patient needs additional clarification or support?

Question 3: Critical thinking/debate

Who is responsible or accountable for ensuring patients understand their healthcare information—the patient, the healthcare provider, or the healthcare system? Why?

- + Does patient responsibility change when stress, fear, pain, or illness affects comprehension?
- + Are there situations where simplifying information could unintentionally limit patient autonomy?
- + How do we maintain informed consent while adapting communication for health literacy needs?

Question 4: Professional identity

As a future CRNA, what type of communicator do you want to be, and how will you intentionally develop that skill?

- + What communication behaviors build trust with patients?
- + What is one communication skill you want to strengthen during clinical training?
- + How can small patient interactions influence the overall anesthesia experience?

Question 5: Exit reflection

If every patient interaction is an opportunity to educate, advocate, and build trust, what is one action you can take to make that true in your practice?