

The Anthem Situation:

Talking Points

- Cataract surgery is very common — Medicare reimbursed 1.7 million cases in 2016 — but also very intense. It requires the surgeon’s full attention s/he operates on a very delicate organ.
- Three things happen simultaneously during this surgery, all of which a single surgeon cannot perform at once: administration of sedation; monitoring the patient and performance of the cataract surgery.
- Cataract surgery commonly uses monitored anesthesia to improve patient comfort and safety.
- Someone specifically trained and licensed to monitor sedated patients must be present as the surgeon concentrates 100 percent on the eye surgery.
- The person monitoring the patient should be an anesthesiologist or CRNA.
- Typically, 9% of patients having cataract surgery require the intervention of an anesthesiologist or CRNA for more than simple sedative administration to ensure a routine, uncomplicated case (i.e. additional medication for comfort, maintaining a clear airway, etc.)
- If no anesthesia personnel are present in the room, a delay in treatment of a routine problem could turn it into a serious complication.
- Patients need to be at a level of sedation in which they are comfortable but able to follow surgeons’ instructions.
- Surgeons are not in a position to know when patients need more or less sedation or stimulation. Likewise, during surgery, surgeons are not in a position to adjust patients’ level of sedation.
- The American Academy of Ophthalmology’s Preferred Practice Pattern® guidelines clearly state that anesthesia personnel should be present when the patient receives sedation significant enough to require intravenous access.

TIPS FOR ENGAGING WITH MEDIA

- Stick to the facts. Explain exactly what you do during cataract surgery and the role of the anesthesia professional. Talk about how the added responsibility over anesthesia will affect your ability to perform surgery.
- Focus on the patient experience. Explain what a patient will see and feel during cataract surgery. Help the reporter understand why monitored anesthesia is a regular part of patients’ comfort. Expand on the differences between patient groups — young versus old, for example — and how this procedure affects them.
- Rely on the Academy as a resource. If you need statistics or other information that goes beyond your clinical experience, refer the reporter to our media relations team. They can help get the reporter any additional information s/he might need.