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Investigation and Evaluation of SRNA Barriers to IANA Engagement

Brittany N. Smith, BSN, RN

Introduction of the Problem

Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) is a growing healthcare professional field in the United States. The total number of CRNAs in the United States eligible for American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA) membership has risen from 27,000 in 1994 to 45,000 in 2014. Despite the continued increase in CRNAs eligible for AANA membership, the number of AANA members is declining (Farina, Wilson, & FitzSimmons, 2016). Between 2006 and 2015, AANA saw a 5% reduction in CRNA memberships (Farina et al., 2016). Recent graduates and newly certified CRNAs compose the largest group of nonmembers and are the least involved in the AANA (Farina et al., 2016). Farina et al. (2016) reported that over 50% of current non-AANA members were considered recent graduates and had practiced less than 10 years.

Not only has the AANA experienced an overall decline in membership, but the Illinois Association of Nurse Anesthetist (IANA) has as well. Illinois had a total of 257 Student Registered Nurse Anesthetists (SRNAs) in 2018; however, very limited number of SRNAs attended conferences or participated in IANA events. The 2018 Spring IANA conference was attended by only 35 SRNAS, roughly 13.6% of the total student population in Illinois (Roderick, 2018). The purpose of this project was to investigate barriers to Illinois SRNA engagement among IANA.

Literature Review

A review of literature was conducted to investigate barriers to SRNA engagement in professional organizations. Finding limited evidence on barriers to SRNA and CNRA

professional organization engagement, the literature search was expanded to include other healthcare professions. The literature review yielded six common barriers to declining membership among professional organizations: (1) lack of knowledge about professional organizations, (2) not understanding the value of membership and engagement, (3) cost of membership, (4) time, (5) peer and educator influence, and (6) generational differences.

Lack of knowledge, not understanding the value, and costs of membership were found to be major contributors to lack of student engagement in professional organizations. Coerver (2011) and Farina et al. (2016) reported cost combined with the low perception of value in membership was a major reason for not joining a professional organization. Additional research suggested respondents who went to a state meeting as a student, were members of a student organization ($n = 79$; $p = 0.038$), served on a committee of a student organization ($n = 33$; $p = 0.025$), or served as a student representative on a state association board during school ($n = 8$; $p = 0.021$) were more likely to be members of Kentucky Pharmacists Association (KPhA) as practitioners (Taylor et al., 2017). The same study reported 23.5 % of the respondents' cited high costs as deterrents to maintaining membership (Taylor et al., 2017).

Time, peer influence, and generational differences were also identified as barriers for student engagement in professional organizations. Activities and professional conferences that take up a considerable amount of time, and require time to travel, consistently led to lower participation among students (Michael et al., 2016). A SRNA experiences a higher perceived level of stress (7.2), compared to a CRNA mean stressor score of 4.3 (Chippas & Mckenna, 2011). The time constraints, pressure of families, and high stress levels may be contributing factors to low SRNA participation among professional organizations. Evidence also suggested peer influence and generational changes to be possible factors in professional organization

engagement. A qualitative phenomenological research study consisting of 15 nursing graduates, found 93.3% of the respondents cited mentors, educators, ongoing faculty support, and peer influence as important factors for their participation in professional organizations (Lapidus-Graham, 2012). Lastly, generational differences may explain the unique barriers to participation in professional organizations. Myers (2016) conducted a study consisting of 150 professional organization employees to identify what each generation valued most. The top benefit of a professional organization was different for each generation: 50% of Millennials reported job opportunities, 50% of Generation Xers identified the top benefit was industry information, and 48% of Boomers identified code of ethics (Myers, 2016).

Methods

This project involved the development and implementation of a survey to better understand barriers students experience to IANA engagement and involvement. The survey was designed based on the literature review and expert opinion. The purpose was to create a survey to identify barriers to involvement in the IANA for student registered nurse anesthetists (SRNAs) in Illinois.

The survey consisted of 21 questions including multiple choice, select all that apply, choose top three, yes/no, and fill in the blank options. The survey was created to take no more than 5-10 minutes to complete. Prior to implementing the survey, the survey was also presented to Micah Roderick, the Executive Director of IANA, for review of content and ease of use. Micah Roderick offered appropriate feedback and minor revisions were made based on the feedback. The final survey was produced and sent to all SRNA students in Illinois. Along with the survey, an introduction about the project was sent explaining the importance of participation.

After a three-week implementation period, data were collected and analyzed. Forty-five SRNAs completed the survey, reflecting a 17.5% participation rate.

The project was deemed a quality improvement project, and therefore, exempt through Southern Illinois University Edwardsville IRB. There were no identifying information collected and the study did not involve patients. The risks were minimal and survey was voluntary.

Evaluation

The goal of the survey was to investigate Illinois SRNAs' perceived barriers to IANA participation and engagement. Evaluation of the barriers was completed through the survey and data analysis. All 45 participants were SRNAs enrolled in a program in Illinois, 42.22% (n=19) were male, and 57.78% (n=26) were female. Among the 45 respondents, 82.22% (n=37) were 25-34 years old, and 17.78% (n=8) were 35-44 years old, with no other age groups represented. Demographic data on year in the program indicated the largest represented year was 3rd year students at 48.89% (n=22), followed by 2nd year 37.78% (n=17), and lastly, 1st year students representing 13.33% (n=6) of the total respondents. A large percentage, 73.33% (n=33) of the SRNAs paid for their own AANA membership dues, 13.33% (n=6) reported their program paying for their dues, and 13.33% (n=6) were unsure who paid for their membership dues.

An overall theme gleaned from the results was the potential need for education about IANA, and how membership dues are used as potential barriers to engagement. A majority of respondents, 82.22% (n= 37) answered 'yes' to knowing what IANA is. Five participants, 11.11% answered they had somewhat of an idea of IANA, and 6.67% (n=3) responded not knowing what IANA was. Of the three who responded they did not know what IANA was, two (66.67%) were 1st year students. Of the five who answered somewhat of an idea as to what IANA was, n=3, 2nd year students and n=2, 3rd year students reported not completely knowing

what IANA was. Only 24.4% (n=11) of participants reported knowing how membership dues are used, while 75.6% (n=34) reported not understanding where their dues go or how they are used. Additionally, results imply SRNAs are more invested after attending Mid-Year Assembly. This was evidenced by the responses to the question regarding attendance at the Mid-Year Assembly. Only 33.3% (n=15) of students had attended, and of these 15 students, 70% (n=14) reported they were more invested after attending. These results lack strong credibility because of the 17 students who answered this question, only 14 attended the meeting.

Responses to two of the questions seemed to be contradictory. When asked if they had attended a state IANA conference, 75.56% (n=34) reported they had attended an IANA conference. However, in a separate question, only 37.78% (n=17) participants reported they had used IANA services. It is possible not all students recognized that the conferences were considered a service, and this could indicate a need for further education about IANA services. Additionally, 89.19% (n=33) reported it was required by their program to attend a state conference, while only 10.81% (n=4) said it was not a requirement to attend.

Students reported potential barriers to engagement including not understanding where their fees for membership are used, lack of time, excess stress, and lack of knowledge about IANA services. Over half, 55.56% (n = 25) of the respondents reported wanting to know more about how their IANA membership dues are used. Only 8.89% (n=4) of the students reported not intending to maintain IANA membership after graduation. However, 31.11% (n=11) were unsure if they would maintain membership, and only 60% (n=27) planned to keep IANA membership after graduation. Reasons to not maintain membership were: plans to leave state (36.84%; n= 7), do not see value in IANA membership (21.05%; n=4), cost/financial burden and not enough time (both 10.53%; n=2), not enough IANA events to attend (5.26%; n=1), and other (26.32%; n=5).

Of the four who would not maintain membership, 75% (n=3) were 3rd year SRNAs, and 25% (n=1) was a 2nd year. When asked why a SRNA does not attend or use IANA services in a select all that apply question, 59.26% (n=16) answered lack of time, 48.15% (n=13) reported stress, and 33.33% (n=9) answered lack of knowledge of IANA and what they offer. Of the nine respondents who answered lack of knowledge, 55.56% (n=5) were 1st year students.

Interestingly, 86.11 % (n=31) of SRNAs reported attending IANA conferences was valuable. Moreover, respondents reported the top three most valuable services IANA provides students were: professional advocacy (68.99%), conferences to attend (66.67%), and networking opportunities (51.11%). Activities that students reported to motivate them to maintain IANA membership, in a choose top three format, were: hands on educational clinics (70.45%; n=31), lowered meetings/costs (52.27%, n=23), CEUs offered online (47.73%, n=21), more social events to attend (38.64%, n=17), closer access to meetings and more networking opportunities, respectively, (36.63%, n=16), more CEUs in person (20.45%, n=9), and other (4.55%, n=2). Lastly, SRNAs reported the top three IANA events that would most interest them as: educational clinics (n=31; 68.89%), happy hours (n=26; 57.78%), and networking opportunities (n=23; 51.11%).

The data suggests first year SRNAs represent the largest group who do not understand what IANA is and are unsure of services IANA offers. Additionally, all but one (n=5) first year SRNAs answered lack of knowledge as a reason they did not attend an IANA conference. While education about IANA is important for all SRNAs, the data suggests 1st year SRNAs are the most deficient in IANA knowledge.

The project had limitations related to demographic data, and sample size. A larger sample size could have garnered more persuasive data and different results. Additionally, having

a greater variation in demographic, with more first year SRNAs could imply different results and needs. Having only six responses from first year students made it difficult to delineate demographic data that was useful. Moreover, 82.22% (n=37) were aged 25-34, and only 17.78% (n=8) were 35-44 years old. There were no SRNAs accounted for in any other age groups. Narrowing the 25-34 year old age group, and also forming the age groups to closer align with generations would be beneficial in interpreting data. Another data point that could have been informative and helpful is what program the SRNA is in.

Impact on Practice

The short-term goal of the project was to develop and implement a survey to help identify barriers to SRNA engagement in IANA. The long-term goal was to use the survey results to aid in implementing strategies to increase student participation in IANA events. Education on membership dues, and IANA services to SRNAs might be beneficial to help increase understanding and motivation to engage in IANA and to maintain membership. At this time, there is a plan to select a student to continue this project by implementing strategies that increase SRNA engagement based on the survey results.

Identifying the barriers to student engagement will help IANA guide their efforts and interventions in the future. The Executive Director plans to present the results of the survey to the IANA board of directors. Based on this information, the Executive Director plans to investigate the possibility of providing more hands on clinics at conferences, offering online CEUs, and investigating how to better educate SRNAs about IANA. It may be worthwhile to consider another survey in the future to better assess generational changes, and the evolving needs of an SRNA from a professional organization.

Conclusions

The survey served as a good tool to collect data on SRNAs that have not previously been investigated. The survey fulfilled the needs of the Executive Director of IANA, and will serve as a foundation to analyze, and make changes in order to garner more student engagement. This survey will serve as a template for IANA to better understand SRNAs' knowledge and perceptions of IANA. Furthermore, the survey was successful in identifying barriers SRNAs experience with IANA participation.