

EDUCATION – CLINICAL

OUR FUTURE



SRNA Sedation Sequels



**FALL 2020
Issue 16**

The Semesterly Newsletter Produced by Florida International
University's Student Registered Nurse Anesthetists



Congratulations to all our seniors who graduated in the Class of 2020!

Each year, our Nurse Anesthetist students are charged with completing a DNP project as part of their degree. These projects are very successful and give students the important experiences to produce research and scholarship during their academic career. Many of our students receive opportunities to travel to conferences to present their projects and publish articles in scholarly publications. In addition, these initiatives help increase excellence and rankings of our Nurse Anesthetist Program throughout the country. Currently, the Nurse Anesthetist Program is ranked #88 in the country by U.S. News & World Report. The College seeks philanthropic support to provide these experiences for our students as the university does not cover these costs. Please consider supporting our students with a tax deductible gift to support the Nurse Anesthetist Program.

You can make your tax deductible gift in one of two ways:

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MARC Building 5th Floor
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Message From the Department's Interim Chair



I would like to wish the faculty, clinical partners and future CRNA colleagues a happy National CRNA Week.

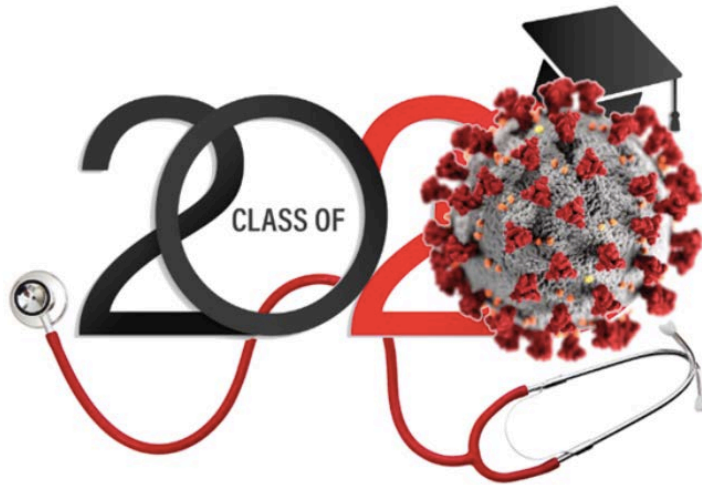
Welcome Class of 2023, and welcome back Classes of 2022 and 2021. In December, I often experience the most enjoyable part of my job as a faculty member because I get to witness the rite of passage of SRNAs graduating and becoming my colleagues. Although this last graduation was not exactly what anyone expected, it was still a proud and joyous moment. The DNAP graduated 37 future CRNAs who will change the world.

As we begin the 2021 calendar year, we are filled with anticipation of a return to normalcy. Remember we are all in this together and stronger as a result. I look forward to working with each one of you in making the FIU Anesthesiology Nursing Program the top program in the country. Thank you for all your hard work.

Jorge A. Valdes, DNP, CRNA, APRN
Interim Chair, Department of Nurse Anesthetist Practice

The "COVID Class": How the Pandemic Affected the SRNA Class of 2020

By: David Luth, C/O 2021



The COVID-19 pandemic changed everyone's lives last year, however, arguably the students most affected were those of the class of 2020. FIU Class of 2020 classmates Josef Ghitis and Irahisa Disla explained what it was like to be part of the "Covid Class".

How did COVID-19 change your school experience?

Josef: *We lost the experience of being around our classmates we were used to spending time with. It sucked going virtual. But at the end of the day you still have to study and put in the work regardless. It almost made things easier going virtual because we got to work and study from home and didn't have to be on campus at a certain hour.*



Irah: *How did it not change it? Everything changed. Everything came to a screeching halt. We were going to clinicals and working four days a week. It went from a feast to nothing. Covid happened during the time of the year when everyone was expecting to get their numbers. You start to hone in on your skills your final year. This is where you start to get into a student sweet spot. It just never came to that because everything shut down. Classes were no longer in person. It was hard.*



What were the challenges?

Irah: *Living arrangements were a big deal. I live with my elderly mother. It wasn't like I could isolate. It was hard to concentrate constantly wondering "Am I going to get sick?" There were so many unknowns. It was difficult trying to get through the content but also pay attention to everything in the news and what was happening around me.*

Were you ever concerned for your safety?

Josef: *No. We went back to clinical in May [having stopped clinicals in March]. As healthcare providers we are already aware of the risks that we take when we step into a hospital even though this was a bit a different than normal circumstance. We were providing everything we needed. Hospitals did a good job at protecting us.*

Irah: *At first I was. I was concerned about what I might be bringing home. I had a whole decontamination routine. I was the procurer of goods for my family. But I'm the type of person that goes with the flow. I think they did a good job in trying to get us back in a quick, safe and effective manner.*

Did it bring you guys together as a class?

Josef: *It brought us together in a different sort of way. In person we were a very close group.*

But we stayed in communication. I think it did bring us all together in a way.

Irah: *We were a pretty tight knit bunch. We were relatively close together. I think it made us situationally aware that we were not in each other's face; we missed each other's company. As our class president, Michael, said at graduation, "We used to look forward to clinical because that's where we saw our classmates." We had a nice level of togetherness.*

Did you miss not having a proper graduation?

Josef: *It wasn't like a true graduation. Unfortunately, that couldn't happen, but at the end of the day we still graduated, still got to take boards on time. Dr. Valdes did his best providing a hooding ceremony. We were able to go to campus at a specific time according to advisors. We were able to take photos, socially distanced, of course. They gave us the opportunity to come back next year to get hooded.*



Irah: *I was definitely upset. As were most of us. We attempted to have a Covid compliant ceremony at least for the hooding. I think we missed the hooding ceremony the most. The graduation is quick. The hooding ceremony is more specific to nursing. We didn't get to put a nice a neat bow on the ending of our journey, especially as it was the last time we would be able to get together.*

Did anything good come out of the pandemic?

Josef: *The good thing is that we were able to overcome the challenges that were presented by Covid. Everyone got their numbers and everyone graduated. And that's what's important.*

Irah: *To every dark cloud there's a silver lining. There's always some good that you can derive from any adversity. That's part of the human experience. We are here to learn and grow. With Covid, academically*

it helped us concentrate more and focus more. That 6 weeks we were out we were able to focus just on academics. The other thing is that we were able to see our faculty and the site coordinators rally round us. They made sure we got all of our hours. It was nice to see them rally around that.

What are your future CRNA plans?

Josef: *I'll be working in Manhattan at New York Presbyterian Hospital. I start in March. It feels good to not have to study for the boards now that I've passed.*

Irah: *It's cliché but there are endless possibilities. In the short term I'm going up to New Jersey to work at a local community hospital that is close to New York City. The first year out of school is like sharpening your knife. That's when you really get to hone in on your skills. I want to take advantage of what anesthesia has to offer. This first year I want to concentrate on having fun, spending time with family. School was heavy. It will be nice not to have to worry about that next assignment or test. We have delayed life for the last three years. At first, I thought I was going to stay in Miami. But something was calling me home back to New Jersey. There is less commitment. For those looking to travel, it's going to be cool to practice in another "country." Not quite another country, but almost. I think it makes you a stronger CRNA. It makes you strong professionally.*

Any advice for seniors?

Josef: *Enjoy it because it's going to fly by. As you start doing rotations and specialties, you'll realize how quickly the time passes by. Try to make the most of your experience while you're there. Take something from every experience you have, even if you don't like it because there is always something to be learned.*

Irah: *This is life advice in general. Things don't get easier. There is always something else. The SEE exam, a hard rotation with a test the next day. There is always something else that we are trying to overcome. It's hard to stay happy and motivated or enthusiastic. I think it's always about trying to keep the end goal in mind. This is always going to be worth it in the end. You have to find the positives that will get you through that next challenge.*

Clinical Spotlight: Leanne Wade Broward Health Medical Center

By: James Pyle, C/O 2021

Get to know Leanne Wade. She is the hard-working clinical coordinator at Broward General Hospital.



Tell me your background. Where are you from originally? How did you get into nursing?

I was born and raised in South Florida. I changed my mind from medical school and really liked the idea of autonomy as a CRNA with a strong background in sciences. My mother, a nurse herself, is the one who educated me on the career of a CRNA.

Where did you go to school for college and how long have you been a CRNA?

I also have a B.A. in Biology and a Minor in Spanish from Rhodes College in Memphis, TN. I moved back home and got accepted into the accelerated option for Nursing at Barry University and received my Bachelor Degree in Nursing in 12 months. I've been a nurse for 14 years. I worked at Broward General CVICU nightshift for one year. It was my first job immediately out of nursing school. I worked for approximately 15 months before entering my CRNA program. I graduated in 2008 from Barry University.



What made you pursue anesthesia?

I have always been interested in biology and medicine. During a course in college (Animal Physiology), we had to perform multiple lab experiments as a group on live rats. If the rat died before the experiment ended, you had to repeat the entire thing. We were all assigned roles in the experiment- research, data collection, anesthesia, surgery, etc. Of course in the first experiment I was assigned to research- well, the rat died with about 15 minutes left in the experiment and we had to start all over. I was quite displeased with this outcome, especially for the sake of the rat. From this point on, I always volunteered for the role of anesthesia. We did not have to repeat any experiments for the rest of the semester.



What do you enjoy about working as a CRNA?

Independence, autonomy, and diversity of cases. Being able to make a difference in patient lives without them knowing.

How long have you been an educator?

I assumed the formal role of Clinical Coordinator in 2015

Have you been an educator at other institutions besides FIU?

Barry University. I started working with FIU last year.

What drove you to become a coordinator and what do you enjoy about it?

I wanted to have a role in maintaining and improving the profession. I enjoy meeting each student and learning about their background. I also enjoy watching new students come in timid and wide eyed and watching them grow to become independent professionals ready to take on any case.

Can you tell me about your family?

I've been married for 12 years this past August, we met and started dating in 2001. We have two children: Avery, my 10 year old daughter, and Colton, my 8 year old son.



Is there anything in particular you like to do to de-stress from work or enjoy doing on your days off?

I love spending time with my family and children. I am a board member of the PTO at my children's school and I am also the room mom for one of their classes. During Spring and Summer I spend a lot of time attending my son's baseball games and I also volunteer as a coach for my daughter's softball team.

Any recommendations on how to be successful in CRNA school?

Everyone has a different definition of "success". I am a firm believer that in the program, as with many other areas or things in life, what you put into it you will get out of it. Once you have

committed to a program, truly commit yourself. You can certainly pass and become a CRNA by meeting the basic requirements, but imagine what you can achieve if you double or triple the basic requirements...

Any experiences or additional thoughts you would like to share?

As a CRNA in any point of the day you can change someone's life. For example, one day I went down to a trauma to find out it was a Little girl that had drowned and was coded for two hours. I aided the intubation and stayed with her for two hours to assist the team in saving her life. She was able to eventually walk out of the hospital and live her life.



Lobby Day: Student & Professor Perspectives

By Odlanier Herbert, C/O 2022, Jonathan Morris C/O 2022, &
David Luth, C/O 2021



Odlanier's Perspective:

My name is Odlanier Hebert. I am a first-year SRNA at Florida International University. I chose this institution because it is leading the country in diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. I am an immigrant to this country and now a citizen. I know from experience that commitment and hard work are the keys to a better future. When I started classes last January, I identified with the advocacy actions espoused by faculty members and my fellow students, and I

Jonathan's Perspective:

I had the opportunity to attend the Florida Association of Nurse Anesthetist's (FANA) lobbying session via Zoom with Florida State Senator Jason Pizzo. Dr. Ann Miller lobbied at this meeting advocating for CRNAs and illuminating her passion for the profession of nurse anesthesia. Additional FANA members also spoke, sharing personal stories from their careers. Senator Pizzo was interested to learn that upon completing a nurse anesthesia program,

decided to actively contribute to those efforts.

My first task was to identify the areas of potential improvement within the profession and craft ways to help. I started by educating myself. I have participated in continuing education opportunities regarding diversity, advocacy, and legislature advocacy on behalf of our profession.

Recently, I had the pleasure of participating in a lobbying session with one of our State Senators, led by Dr. Ann B. Miller and other FANA members. We explained the importance and the contribution CRNAs make to the state of Florida. The discussion encouraged me to look forward to providing my continuing contributions to further CRNA advocacy, which I can do as a member of the AANA CRNA-PAC and the FANA PAC.

The principles I learned in our advocacy and lobbying training have provided the foundation to understand better how the democratic system works and how important it is for us all to commit to become engaged and raise our efforts at every opportunity. This is our future and our cause. Let's work together to get the respect and opportunities we have worked so hard for. I urge my fellow students to join me in our efforts to forge a better future.

graduates earn a Doctorate in Nursing Practice (DNP), have an average of 9,369 hours of clinical experience, and must successfully pass the national certification exam to list their credentials as a CRNA.

I had the opportunity to speak to the Senator at this lobbying event. I informed him that a friend of mine attended CRNA school in Florida but currently works at Walter Reed Military Hospital in Maryland, where he practices independently. The ability to do the same in Florida would draw seasoned, well-experienced CRNAs to the state, providing high-quality care to members of our community. Attending the meeting was an eye-opening opportunity to witness the passion that CRNAs have for the profession and the potential impact one can have on the profession.

Dr. Miller's Perspective, by David Luth

I sat down with FIU Department of Nurse Anesthesia Interim Assistant Program Director Dr. Ann Miller over Zoom and asked her about her experience lobbying Senator Jason Pizzo. When I asked her why she is interested in lobbying and how she got into it, she gives me a big smile with a knowing laugh. “Oh, I’ve been lobbying for over 30 years since before I became a nurse. I have a Bachelor’s degree in political science and I used to work in Washington, DC on Capitol Hill with Congressman Fernand St. Germain from Rhode Island on the House Banking Committee. I started out my career as a paralegal, helping to write legislation.”

Dr. Miller went on to explain that she helped write some significant pieces of healthcare legislation during her time working on the Hill. This is an accomplishment of which she is proud. It was doing this work on healthcare legislation that actually pointed her to a career in nursing, a path that has led her to where she is today, as a CRNA and FIU faculty member. I ask her why lobbying is so important; many people are not political and do not think that what happens in government affects them.

“Lobbying educates our political forum,” Dr. Miller explains. “It teaches our representatives who CRNAs are, the significance of our profession, and informs them of what we have to offer.” And what is the significance of CRNAs?

“During this pandemic CRNAs have stepped up and worked on the front lines.” Dr. Miller goes on to explain that CRNAs have taken a front seat fighting COVID and put their lives on the line by intubating COVID patients and managing ventilators on the ICU, in addition to their regular duties. CRNAs are qualified to work in any practice setting, administer every type of anesthesia for all patient populations, and they have a proven safety record. Despite the increase in CRNAs over the past several decades, anesthesia is 50 times safer today than it was in the 1980s. With the rising cost of healthcare CRNAs provide cost effective anesthesia to millions of patients every year.

As we end our conversation Dr. Miller reminds me that “As CRNAs we have to advocate for ourselves because no one else is going to do it for us.” Sage advice.

One Year In: Life After Graduation From FIU DNAP

By: David Luth, C/O 2021 & Cesar Lopez, C/O 2021

A year after graduation we wanted to see how things were going for newly minted FIU CRNAs in their first year of practice. Stephanie Chong (C/O 2019) and Sandra Amoretti (C/O 2019) took positions at Mount Sinai Medical Center in early 2020.



Interview with Stephanie, by David Luth

How has the transition from SRNA to CRNA been?

Since Mt. Sinai was my base the transition was seamless. I was already comfortable with the staff, the flow, and the types of cases one can see here. I just changed my uniform and started getting paid for what I was already doing.

Do you think your clinical skills and knowledge were up to par once you graduated?

Interview with Sandra by Cesar Lopez

What is the difference between how you felt as an SRNA and how you feel now that you have turned that “S” into a “C”?

Initially, it was a little intimidating because there is no more safety net as a licensed practitioner. As a CRNA, the safety of patients is entirely one’s responsibility. I have always been very careful and meticulous, but it does feel like the stakes are higher when one’s license is on the line. Now that I have become more comfortable, however, it feels great to put into play all the

I do! During clinicals you get what you put into it. If you stay longer so that you can practice a certain skill you'll be more prepared when that S turns into a C. When new cases popped up, or the opportunity to perform a skill became available, I would stay late to get the practice in. I'm a visual learner; performing the skill is what helped me learn."

What is the difference between how you felt as an SRNA and how you feel now that you have turned that S into a C?

Once I passed the NCE I had less anxiety. I felt like 'okay, I got it'. Passing the boards gave me a boost of confidence. Another difference is that as a CRNA you have less tunnel vision than as a student. As a student you focus on getting your intubation or placing your line, and that's all you focus on. As a CRNA you have a clearer picture of the entire case, not just that one skill you're trying to master.

How has it been, starting your career during this COVID pandemic?

A lot more tiring! I think it might be wearing the N95 all day, but I feel more exhausted since the pandemic took over. It has definitely made me more conscientious of infection control and making sure I don't transmit germs, which is a good thing.

things that I have learned and to be able to practice anesthesia in my own style confidently.

How has the transition from SRNA to CRNA been?

It has been a smooth transition because I built up my skillset over the entirety of my clinical residency as a student. What has required an adjustment period, considering that I work at a teaching hospital, is that I've taken on a new role as an educator. I went straight from student to teaching students. I had to learn to keep refining my craft while training future CRNAs.

Do you think that your clinical skills and knowledge base were up to par after graduation and did you feel ready?

My perspective in life is that you can't feel 100% ready for most challenges all of the time. However, I did feel that I was adequately prepared to continue building on the skillset that I developed as an SRNA. I was as ready as I could be to manage cases independently and handle the tasks that are required from a CRNA.

Do you remember your first day as a licensed CRNA?

I do because that was the first time I had to ventilate a patient with an Ambu-Bag! It was

How has it affected your job?

Luckily we have not been furloughed or had our hours cut. Some of my classmates were promised big salaries and bonuses at other facilities right before the pandemic only to be forced into taking furlough with no pay, and never receiving their bonuses. One of my classmates took a huge pay cut. I feel really grateful that I chose to work where I did.

Any advice for students still in the program?

Stay focused. Put your head down. Take all the opportunities you can while you're a student. The time will fly by.

quite a day, but it served to reinforce the importance of checking emergency equipment before an anesthetic case. I checked all equipment, and everything was in order, but then the ventilator malfunctioned. I was glad that I maintained my routine and made sure that the emergency equipment was readily available. Aside from that, case management went as usual, except that I felt my pace was slower. However, my speed and confidence improved over the next two weeks.

How has the Covid-19 pandemic affected your clinical practice?

The pandemic has made anesthesia personnel more conscientious about infection control than ever. Great care has to be taken to ensure patient safety and for one's own well being as well. I am particularly careful during induction and emergence from anesthesia, as these are critical points in which aerosolization of a contagion is most likely.

Do you have any advice for SRNAs that you would have liked to receive while you were still a student?

Don't be afraid to ask questions or try new things (with permission, of course). It's important for students to get the perspective of other people when they are unsure of a certain matter. Once you are a CRNA, you

may feel that you're expected to know everything and asking for help might be intimidating. Not that there is anything wrong with asking questions once you become licensed, but the level of comfort might not be there. As a student, you have the best opportunity to ask as many questions as you can.

Life as an SRNA: A Parent's Perspective

By: Robert Dillon, C/O 2021



It is often taught that the beginning and the end of an essay are the two most memorable parts; therefore, I would like to start this opinion piece by saying THANK YOU to all the family, friends, and loved ones that keep us going every single day. Juggling 40 hours a week or more of clinicals (including holidays, weekends, and nightshifts) on top of graduate level school work has been no easy task, and without our respective support systems it would have been impossible by now. If it takes a village to raise a child, then it must take two villages (and a lot of student loans) to raise an SRNA, but I am forever thankful to the classmates and family members that give me emotional support each and every day.



Being a parent while in this program presents another unique set of challenges to face. Constantly plagued with guilt from being away from my family, I frequently question if I am making the right decision. Leaving for clinical before my daughter wakes up and getting home right before or just after bedtime most days of the week makes me feel like I am missing out on those important, life-long bonding moments that are essential to childhood. Of course a two-year-old won't have vivid memories of it, but the Erickson's or Piaget's of the world might argue that all the weekends at the library (pre-COVID) or locked away in a room studying, may not be completely innocuous. This pain I feel is only half of what my other classmates with older children experience, as they are forced to put on their capes and heroically balance the course work, social development, and activities of their school age children on top of their own.



Online learning at home during a pandemic, with the distractions our homes have, has only compounded the stress of this program in a way unimaginable to previous cohorts, but it is the way in which the world now works and during these dynamic times we have learned to become flexible. It is truly amazing that we have somehow survived up until this point, often moving mountains just to hold on by a thread it feels. But we are doing it and that is something to be celebrated. As our senior year begins and our responsibilities continue to grow, it feels even more important to say thank you to the family, friends, and loved ones in our lives who help to keep us sane. Keep the caffeine coming, and we'll see you in December 2021!

Recipe: Chocolate Crinkle Cookies

Courtesy of Katie Brennan, C/O 2021



With the holidays having just finished, food is always on my mind- but especially Christmas cookies. These chocolate crinkles are soft, chewy, chocolatey, and most importantly, pretty easy to bake. Happy holidays to all!

Ingredients

1 cup unsweetened cocoa powder

2 cups all-purpose flour

1.5 teaspoons baking powder

¼ teaspoon salt

1/3 cup butter softened

1.5 cups white sugar

2 teaspoons vanilla

4 large eggs

½ cup powdered sugar

Instructions

1. Combine dry ingredients (cocoa powder, flour, baking powder and salt) in a mixing bowl and set aside.
2. Combine butter, sugar and vanilla in a mixing bowl and beat with an electric mixer. Add the eggs one at a time, and mix for about 10 seconds each on medium-low speed until they are just combined.
3. Add the dry ingredients to the egg mixture on low speed until mixed.
4. Chill cookie dough for at least one hour or overnight.
5. When you are ready to bake, preheat your oven to 350 degrees F. Place powdered sugar in a mixing bowl and roll the dough into tablespoon-sized balls, covering them with powdered sugar.
6. Place on a lined baking sheet and bake for 10-15 minutes or until spread and crackled. Let them cool 5 minutes before removing them to a cooling rack.



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