



Substance Misuse and Drug Diversion Among Anesthesiology Professionals: Implementation of an Educational Intervention for SRNAs and Their Support Systems

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Background

- Of almost 15% of anesthesiology professionals that misuse substances, the mortality rate is 26-38%.¹
- Anesthesiology professionals are at an even greater risk for substance misuse due to high stress levels, increased access to highly addictive medications, and potential environmental sensitization to their effects.
- The lack of substance misuse education has contributed to even more nurses developing substance use disorders and their inability to help peers that are struggling in the workplace.²
- The impaired individual is often the last to recognize the problem, making it essential that relatives, friends, and coworkers understand symptom recognition and how to seek help.³
- The Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs requires that students demonstrate knowledge of substance use disorder in the anesthesia profession.⁴

Purpose

The purpose was to implement an educational intervention for Northeastern University SRNAs, and a member of their support system, that focuses on substance misuse and drug diversion among anesthesiology professionals, to improve knowledge of symptom recognition, and likeliness of reporting suspected individuals.

Sample Demographics

Participant Characteristics (N = 67)

Characteristic	n	%
Age (years)		
Under 30	36	54%
30-39	26	39%
40-49	0	0%
50-59	2	3%
60-69	2	3%
70+	0	0%
Gender		
Male	19	28%
Female	46	69%
Non-Binary	1	2%
Prefer not to Answer	1	2%
Active Enrollment		
Yes	52	78%
No	15	22%

Methods

- IRB approval for the study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board at Northeastern University (NU) (IRB No. 23-03-43).
- This evidence-based project was a descriptive comparative evaluation that utilized pre-post survey methodology.
- Inclusion criteria: Current enrollment as an SRNA in NU's Bouvé College of Health Sciences Doctor of Nursing Practice Nurse Anesthesia Program (Classes of 2024, 2025, or 2026); self-identified member of support system by these SRNAs; age ≥ 18 years; English speaking.
- Electronic anonymous surveys were administered to collect data about perception, knowledge, and likeliness of reporting.
- The educational intervention included the presentation of Rodrigo and Claudia Garcia's lecture "Catch Me if You Can: The Impaired Provider"
- Participants had the option to attend in person or virtually on Zoom.
- Analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test.

Discussion

- The results of this study revealed the benefits of a CRNA-led educational intervention to improve perception, knowledge, and likeliness of reporting among SRNAs and members of their support systems.
- A unique contribution was the value provided when this was presented by a CRNA who has both personal and professional experience with this topic.
- One limitation of this study was that the student participants all attended the same anesthesia program, and therefore had similar educational backgrounds.
- It would be beneficial to study the impact that this education has overtime.
- Individual institutions should strive towards a transparent and universal policy for reporting impaired providers. Encouraging reporting rather than stigmatizing the act, will break down barriers and provide a safer environment for everyone, including patients.
- This intervention exceeded COA requirements and helps establish a formal program that can serve as a model for nurse anesthesia programs across the country.

Results

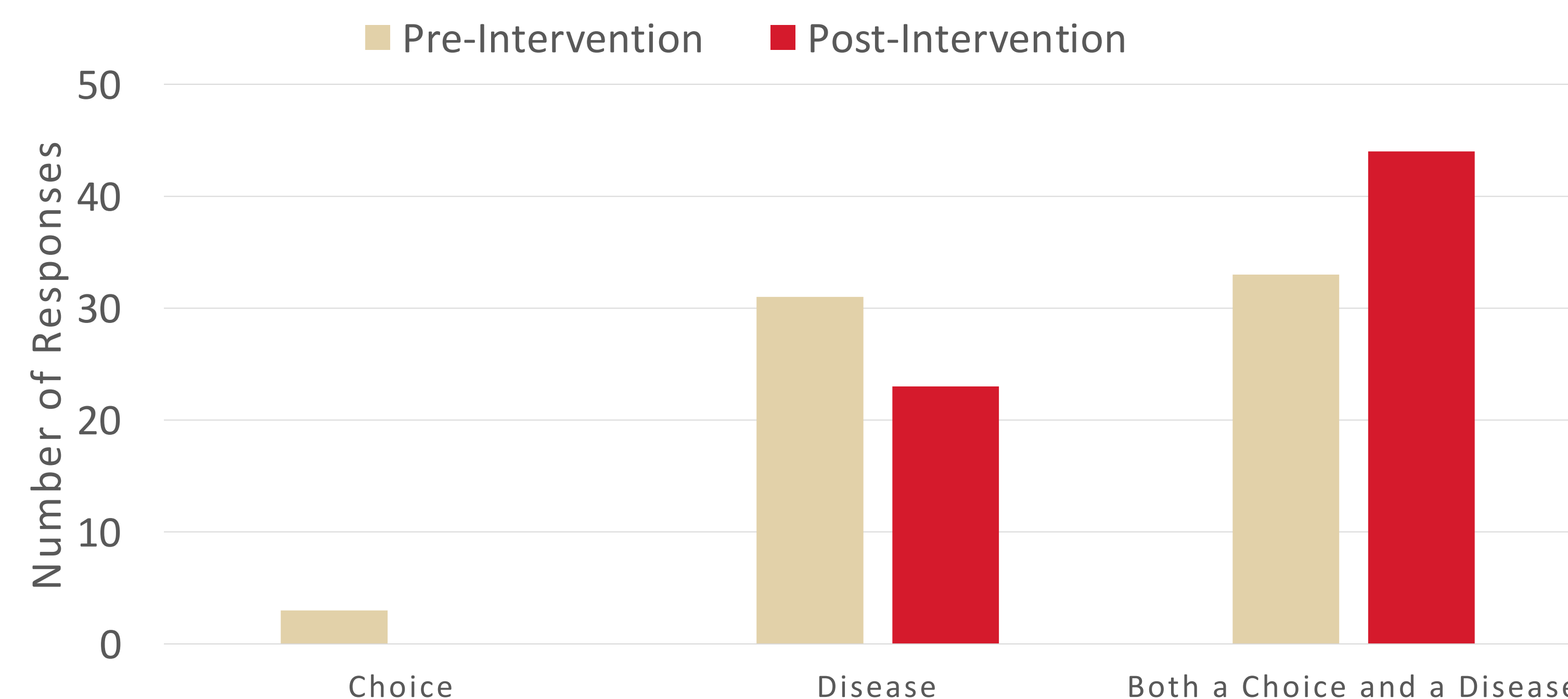
Changes in Knowledge (N = 67)

Questions	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention	Z	p
	Excellent/Good n (%)			
How would you rate your understanding of steps you can take to improve the safety of an impaired anesthesiology professional?	14 (21%)	64 (95%)	-770	< .001
How would you rate your understanding of why anesthesiology professionals are at high risk for substance misuse and drug diversion?	46 (69%)	67 (100%)	-525.5	< .001

Changes in Likeliness of Reporting (N = 67)

Statements	Pre-Intervention n (%)	Post-Intervention n (%)	Z	p
I am somewhat or very confident in identifying signs and symptoms of substance misuse among anesthesiology professionals.	33 (49%)	56 (83%)	-381.5	< .001
I am somewhat or very likely to report or seek help, for an anesthesiology professional I suspect is misusing or diverting drugs.	39 (58%)	58 (87%)	-332.5	< .001

Changes in Perception of Addiction (N = 67)



- Knowledge and likeliness of reporting substance misuse and drug diversion increased after the educational intervention.
- More participants now perceive addiction to be both a choice and a disease.
- The most impactful component for participants was hearing the speakers' personal testimony.
- 100% of participants found it valuable to receive this education from a CRNA who had both personal and professional experience regarding this topic.
- Most SRNAs (82.7%) found it valuable for a member of their support system to receive education on this topic.

