Anesthesiology has not been accorded with the public’s perception as practicing medicine because the care anesthesiologists provide is intense, usually of limited duration, and almost all of it unseen by the patient who benefits from the work. Anesthesiologists are multiskilled physician specialists with strong backgrounds in the principles of physiology, pharmacology, internal medicine, pain management, and surgical procedures. They apply their knowledge of medicine to fulfill their primary role in the operating room. Traditionally, that role has been understood to include providing for comfort of the patient by anesthetizing the pain of surgery. Yet it is the anesthesiologist’s foremost purpose and concern to protect the patient’s well-being and safety just prior to, during, and after surgery.

Anesthesiologists have many responsibilities: preoperative evaluation of patients to determine conditions that may complicate surgery; management of pain and emotional stress during surgical, obstetrical, and medical procedures; provision of life support under the stress of anesthesia and surgery; immediate postoperative care of the patient; and knowledge of drugs and their interactions with anesthetic agents. Their functions also include pain management; management of problems in cardiac and respiratory resuscitation; application of specific methods of inhalation therapy; and emergency clinical management of various fluid, electrolyte, and metabolic disturbances.
Profile
The following information reflects responses from 134 anesthesiologists who completed the 2003 Pathway Physician's Survey.

A. Respondents by types of areas

- Large City: 19.40%
- Metropolitan City: 36.57%
- Small City: 35.82%
- Rural: 6.72%
- Other: 1.49%

B. Respondents by gender

- Male: 77.44%
- Female: 22.56%

C. Respondents by years in practice

- 1-5 yrs: 10.29%
- 6-10 yrs: 15.20%
- 11-15 yrs: 22.24%
- 16-25 yrs: 33.69%
- 26-30 yrs: 7.91%
- More than 30 yrs: 2.82%

Perspectives

A. Respondents’ satisfaction with current specialty/area of work

- Very satisfied: 88.24%
- Somewhat satisfied: 9.78%
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied: 1.49%
- Somewhat dissatisfied: 1.33%
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B. Would you choose this specialty again?

- **Very satisfied**
- **Somewhat satisfied**
- **Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied**
- **Somewhat dissatisfied**
- **Very dissatisfied**

C. Respondents by practice environment

D. Respondents' satisfaction with practice environment
Rating and Weighting of Critical Factors

Critical Factors represent significant aspects of physicians’ experiences in their practices. The rating represents their assessment of their current practice characteristics, while the weighting represents the importance of each factor to physicians.

A. Caring for patients: How much time do you spend directly seeing and caring for patients?

B. Continuity of care: How much continuity of care do you have with patients, (i.e., the length of patient relationships)?

C. Autonomy: To what extent do you have the final word on the treatment of your patients?
D. Diversity: How much routine (similar work) or diversity (different tasks/activities) is involved in your work?

\[ \sigma = 2.17 \]

E. Personal time: Does your work allow you to control the scheduling and amount of time you spend on personal activities, (i.e., family, leisure)?

\[ \sigma = 2.64 \]

F. Expertise: How broad is the scope of your work?

\[ \sigma = 2.41 \]
G. Income satisfaction: Compared to all physicians, do you feel you are fairly compensated for the amount of time and effort you spend?

H. Creativity: To what extent does your work provide opportunity for creativity?

I. Certainty of outcomes: How much certainty of clinical outcomes does your work provide?
J. Clinical decision-making: On what basis are your clinical decisions made?

- **Rating:**
  - Application of theory to a situation: 7.4
  - Based on prior evidence of clinical outcomes: 5.6
- **Weighting:**
  - Not at all important: 4.0
  - Very important: 3.2

K. Patient decision-making: To what extent do your patients have input into decisions about their health care?

- **Rating:**
  - Not at all important: 3.2
  - Very important: 5.6
- **Weighting:**
  - Very important: 3.9
  - Not at all important: 3.2

L. Interacting with other physicians/members of health-care team: To what extent does your work provide opportunities for you to interact with other physicians/ members of a health-care team?

- **Rating:**
  - Very little: 8.5
  - A great deal: 3.2
- **Weighting:**
  - Not at all important: 3.9
  - Very important: 8.5
M. Manual/mechanical activities: How often do you use manual/mechanical activities for highly skilled tasks (i.e., following procedures, performing operations)?

- **Rating**: 8.7
- **Weighting**: 4.2

N. Pressure: How much pressure do you have in your work (i.e., dealing with clinical crises, need for immediate decisions about patients, dealing with multiple patients simultaneously).

- **Rating**: 8.2
- **Weighting**: 3.7

O. Responsibility: How much responsibility do you assume for patient outcomes in your work?

- **Rating**: 8.6
- **Weighting**: 4.2
P. Schedule: What type of schedule do you have in your work? 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Graph" /> (\sigma = 2.73)</td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Graph" /> (\sigma = 0.77)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Q. Security: How much professional security do you have in your position, (i.e., know where you stand and are certain of your future professionally, will there be a need for your services in the future)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Graph" /> (\sigma = 2.07)</td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Graph" /> (\sigma = 0.66)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

R. Sense of accomplishment: To what extent does your work provide the opportunity to see end results?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Graph" /> (\sigma = 1.88)</td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Graph" /> (\sigma = 0.62)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Weekly distribution of time
According to the survey, anesthesiologists spend their week as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Average Hours per week (may overlap)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patient care activities</td>
<td>43.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-call (in contact)</td>
<td>12.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-call (available)</td>
<td>25.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>5.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional travel</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing education</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community service</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>6.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professional</td>
<td>4.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Patient profile
A. Patient encounters per week

B. Patient characteristics

By age

- Infants (0-2 yrs): 7.29%
- Children (3-18 yrs): 13.13%
- Adults (19-64 yrs): 50.55%
- Older adults (65+ yrs): 34.56%

By race

- Underrepresented minority (URM): 23.09%
- Non-URM: 76.91%

By type of insurance

- Medicaid/Medicare: 41.57%
- Uninsured: 10.66%
- Other: 47.77%

C. Five types of illnesses/conditions most frequently encountered

- Orthopedic procedures: 68
- Obstetric/Gynecological procedures: 55
- Pain conditions: 53
- Cardiothoracic procedures: 48
- Abdominal procedures: 38

Percentage of patient encounters that deal with:

- Routine check-ups: 2.31%
- Acute illness: 45.17%
- Chronic illness: 46.39%
- Terminal illness: 11.31%

Percentage of time per patient encounter devoted to:

- Acute conditions: 54.51%
- Chronic conditions: 44.76%
- Preventive health: 7.16%
**Specialty: Anesthesiology**  

**Total responses: 134**

**Summary of comments for question:** *List up to three other factors, if any, you would advise students to consider carefully before selecting your specialty?*

Physicians who completed the Pathway Physician’s Survey, 2003, submitted the following comments. The majority of comments are categorized by the Critical Factors that are rated and weighted in another section. Numbers in parentheses indicate the total number of responses for a particular comment.

1. **Caring for Patients**
   - Desire to help people who have been neglected
   - Desire to do acute medicine, not chronic care
   - Talk to patients (2)
   - Chronic vs. acute care
   - Not having your own patients
   - Patients who are very demanding of your time and compassion
   - Satisfaction in relieving patient discomfort

2. **Continuity of Care**
   - Limited exposure to patients
   - Little continuity of care

3. **Autonomy**
   - Ability to work independently
   - Autonomy (2)
   - Independence (3)
   - Limited autonomy (2)
   - Desire for autonomy
   - Lack of control of workload while at work

4. **Diversity**
   - Repetitive caseload

5. **Personal Time**
   - Impact on family life (4)
   - Life outside of medicine
   - Life style (4)
   - Allow for time with family and friends
   - Offers sufficient personal time (3)
   - Time off

6. **Expertise**
   - Ability to mange technology of anesthesia delivery and monitoring
   - Intellectual stimulation
   - Attention to detail
- Basic science knowledge
- Interest in anatomy and physiology
- Intellectually challenging (2)
- Technical skills required
- Interest in pharmacology
- Very broad type medicine

7. Income Satisfaction
- Income potential
- Not the money
- Willing to accept modest income

8. Creativity

9. Certainty of Outcomes

10. Clinical Decision Making
- Rapid decision making (4)
- Ability to act and think quickly
- Make quick decision in emergency

11. Patient Decision Making
- Patients belong to surgeon, not to you

12. Interacting with Other Physicians/Members of Health-care Team
- Ability to interact well with other professionals
- Ability to work as a team (4)
- Ability to work with volatile personalities
- Limited respect among colleagues, patients, administrations
- People skills
- Working with surgeons (6)
- Ability to deal with people
- Ability to work with a variety of personalities
- Lack of respect from surgeons on occasion
- Necessity of working with health care extenders

13. Manual /Mechanical Activities
- How good are you with your hands

14. Pressure
- High pressure/stress (10)
- Sometimes-high pressure/stress
- Job stress
- Calm during crises
15. Responsibility
- Responsibility (2)
- You have no labor rights in this field
- Extremes of responsibility and interest

16. Schedule
- Lack of control over schedule and time (5)
- Long unpredictable hours (6)
- Night calls (2)
- Time constraints (2)
- Amount of call
- Better hours than others
- Call is mandatory
- Impact on sleeping patterns
- Lack of adequate nursing care on the floors causing back-ups in the OR schedule
- Little time to evaluate very sick patients

17. Security
- Job availability (2)
- Job market
- Long-term security (3)

18. Sense of Accomplishment
- Glory and kudos are rare in this specialty
- Satisfaction of a job well done
- Technical skills highly valued
- You are always taken advantage of

19. Patient Characteristics
- Geriatric trend

20. Types of Illnesses
- Must like critical care
- Acute care (2)

21. Practice Environment
- CRNA’s
- Enjoyment of the operating room environment (2)
- Sense of isolation
- Occasional boredom (2)
- OB anesthesia has high litigation
- No clinics
- No overhead costs
- Work environment desired
• Consultant-only service
• High liability potential
• Malpractice exposure

22. Health Care Environment
• Government reimbursement
• Hospital administration
• Inability to control environment
• Limited by insurance companies (2)

23. Personality/Temperament
• Ability to handle changing clinical situations
• Adaptability
• Challenges
• Compassion
• Humility
• Need for feedback from others
• Poise
• Promptness
• Strong personality
• Vigilance
• Tolerance for boredom

24. Miscellaneous Comments
• Be happy with choice or change fields (1)
• Do a rotation in PGY 1
• Do it only because you will enjoy it, not for lifestyle or compensation
• Do not think that anesthesiology residency is easy
• Easy to find coverage
• Ego (2)
• Enjoy the specialty (3)
• Job satisfaction (4)
• Know your specialty and feel comfortable within its parameters
• Length of training (2)
• Location
• Make sure that their decision is based on really wanting to do anesthesia and not solely on present perceived life style
• Not a primary specialty
• Personal priorities
• Select a specialty that both challenges and interests you
• Work ethic
• Areas of interest (2)
• Can you stand on your feet all day when you are 50?
• Commitment
• Fits your capability
• Interesting specialty
• Know your business and how it operates
• Low profile specialty
• Make sure that life style (hours work, ability to make independent decision, ability to work in a team format, etc.) is part of their decision
• Male dominated field
• Malpractice
• Maximize power
• Narcotic addiction
• Self-education
• Willingness to continue learning
• Workload