

ASA PS26

ASA Position Statement on Deep Sedation

Background

Procedural sedation is widely employed to facilitate a variety of medical, dental and other clinical interventions.

Sedation can be classified as light or deep. Light sedation, also described as minimal or moderate sedation, is characterised by the preservation of conscious responses to verbal and light tactile stimulation.

Sedation resulting in the loss of conscious responses is deep sedation. This state is practically indistinguishable from general anaesthesia.

Like general anaesthesia, deep sedation is accompanied by the loss of protective airway reflexes. It is frequently associated with respiratory and cardiovascular depression.

Providers of deep sedation

The risks associated with deep sedation are identical to those which accompany general anaesthesia.

In order to safely manage deep sedation, clinicians must therefore be equipped to deal with general anaesthesia.

In Australia, general anaesthesia is safely undertaken by specialist anaesthetists. Other doctors who provide anaesthesia within their scope of practice include general practitioner anaesthetists, emergency physicians and intensive care physicians.

When sedation is provided by personnel without training in general anaesthesia, deep sedation should be avoided.

ASA response to ANZCA PG09

ANZCA PG09 (guideline for sedation) is currently available as a pilot document. It is supported by the ASA. PG09 provides guidance for the safe provision of minimal and moderate sedation. No guidance is offered for deep sedation.

The limited scope of PG09 should not be regarded as encouragement for the practice of deep sedation by unqualified providers.

The ASA supports the safe practice of deep sedation by qualified medical practitioners in order to preserve the high standards of safety enjoyed by Australian patients.

The ASA has developed this Position Statement based on current evidence which may be subject to change as more information becomes available. It is intended for anaesthetists in Australia (promulgated 3/5/2023). For the latest version, please visit <https://asa.org.au/position-statements/>.