

To whom it may concern,

My name is Kaitlin Adair, and I am proud to be a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist in the Kansas City metro area. I graduated from University Health School of Nurse Anesthesia in 2021 with honors, and have been working in a wide range of practice facilities ever since, including Level 1 trauma hospitals, rural hospitals, outpatient surgery centers, and procedural clinics settings.

My path to anesthesia was not linear, nor was it common. In 2014, I attended University of Missouri - Kansas City and was a student in their Anesthesia Assistant program. I completed approximately 1.5 semesters of the program before withdrawing in June 2014. By January of 2015 I was a nursing student, and in May of 2018 I was beginning CRNA school.

Having experiences in both AA school and CRNA school gives me a fairly unique perspective on the similarities and differences between the two. Both programs of study include classes such as physiology and pharmacology, both programs require hands-on training in operating rooms under licensed professionals, and both programs ultimately require students to pass a national certification exam. The differences, however, are stark. One such difference that is especially alarming is the experience requirements prior to entering each program.

Before attending AA school, I was a Registered Dietitian. My patient care experience included outpatient weight loss counseling, malnutrition consults, and nutrition labeling of hospital cafeteria foods. While my dietetics education provided me with a science background and an introduction to healthcare, it absolutely did NOT teach me how to care for a patient. It did not teach me how to react in crisis situations. It did not teach me how to think critically about complex situations. It did not teach me how to be a healthcare provider. Even still, my experience as a dietitian was enough experience to earn me a spot in the AA program.

Anyone can learn an algorithm. Anyone can be taught to give the purple stick of medicine when the blood pressure drops below X. Algorithms are not patient care. Rote memorization of anesthetic drugs on a "drug sheet" is not patient care. Six weeks of "boot camp" where a program promises to "teach you how to be a nurse" is not patient care. Patient care comes with experience caring for patients at the bedside. It comes with being in crisis situations and learning the "why" behind the "how." It comes from real life, boots on the ground experience - I gained this experience as an ICU nurse, not as a dietitian.

My decision to withdraw from the AA program fell into the category of choosing the harder right over the easier wrong. I knew that becoming an AA felt wrong. I knew that it would be doing myself, and my future patients a disservice. It was the harder decision, but the right decision. It turned out to be one of the best decisions I have ever made.

Next time your daughter, husband, or mother has surgery, I ask you to consider this one simple question: who do you want caring for your loved one in the most vulnerable and critical moments? A former outpatient dietitian? Or a former Level 1 Trauma ICU nurse? Choose wisely, because we are not the same.

Sincerely,

Kaitlin C. Adair, DNP, CRNA