

Data at Your Service: From the ASA Closed Claims Project

Karen L. Posner, Ph.D.
Project Manager, ASA Closed Claims Project

- *I am being named in a lawsuit for a complication, and I'm wondering about similar complications in the Closed Claims Project Database, especially the range of payments that were made in those claims.*
- *I'm presenting a case at my M&M. Have you seen similar cases in the Closed Claims Project database that might shed light on possible causes of this complication?*
- *Our hospital wants us to _____ Do you have any closed claims relevant to this safety issue that could help us develop an appropriate policy?*
- *I'm writing a grant proposal on _____ What is the most recent trend in the Closed Claims Project Database on this topic?*

These are some of the most common types of data requests we receive at the ASA Closed Claims Project from ASA members who are making use of our data request service – a service offered to members at no charge from the ASA Closed Claims Project.

ASA Closed Claims Project Data Request Service

The ASA Closed Claims Project provides custom queries of the database for ASA members. There is a data request form available on the project website (www.asaclosedclaims.org) that must be completed in order to receive a customized data report. It often saves time if the ASA member contacts the project office prior to submitting the data request form in order to clarify the data needs and ascertain whether the project



Karen L. Posner, Ph.D. is Research Professor and Laura Cheney Professor in Anesthesia Patient Safety, Department of Anesthesiology and Pain Medicine, University of Washington, Seattle.

has data relevant to the question (see contact information in box at the end of the article). We can then work with you to make sure we provide the most relevant information. We will query the database to obtain the information to answer your question. Then we provide a brief customized report. The report may include de-identified claim summaries to illustrate various clinical situations relevant to the topic.

Data requests are restricted to clearly-defined and narrow topics that are estimated to require only a few hours of staff time for data retrieval. These are generally restricted to information that is contained in coded items in the database or can be identified by unambiguous keywords. Coded database items include specific damaging events (e.g., difficult intubation, intravascular injection of local anesthetic, cautery fires) or patient injuries (e.g., death, brain damage, airway injury, nerve injury, burns, stroke, etc.). We can restrict the data query to specific types of patients (e.g., age range, sex, ASA Physical Status, inpatient versus outpatient) and time periods. We can also restrict the data query to specific types of anesthesia care such as general anesthesia, regional or peripheral nerve blocks, surgical anesthesia, obstetric anesthesia, acute pain or chronic pain, or broad types of surgery such as cardiac, upper-extremity, lower-extremity, appendix and tonsillectomy, among others. For data queries restricted to specific types of patients, a discussion with project staff is critical to make sure we have the appropriate categories in the database.

Data Use Restrictions

1. Information provided by the member data request service is intended for the personal use of the requester for education, quality improvement and risk management purposes. Information provided in the customized report may be presented locally, such as an M&M conference, and may be included in grant applications. It may be used in risk management activities, such as case review prior to litigation, or in local quality improvement activities.
2. Any broader use of customized data reports requires prior approval. Publication of information contained in customized data reports requires submission of the intended text for review and approval prior to publication. This restriction is intended to prevent unintentional misinterpretation of project data. Public presentation to

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a regional or national audience also requires approval. Approvals can usually be obtained within a few days.

3. Customized data reports are restricted to non-commercial use. We cannot provide customized data retrieval for market analysis or product development.
4. Resident ASA members are required to have a regular member co-sign the data request. The co-signing mentor is responsible for compliance with the data use policy.
5. More details on these data use restrictions are included on the data request form. It is important to review these restrictions and recognize that you, as the receiver of a custom data report, are responsible for appropriate use of that report.

Collaboration Requests

If your research question requires more complex analysis than provided through the data request service, then collaboration with the project team may be an option. Recent collaborations have included publications on cervical spinal cord and root and bony spine injuries (Hindman B, et al. *Anesthesiology*. 2011; 114:782-795). A data inquiry by a non-anesthesiologist that was not eligible for our data request service also resulted in a collaborative publication (Lee, et al. *Anesthesiology*. 2011; 115:713-717). If you have a research interest that would result in an extended analysis for public dissemination, a discussion with project staff regarding potential collaboration is recommended.

What Is Not Offered?

The Closed Claims Project Data Request Service is only offered to ASA members. We do not provide this service to the general public or to patients. A member may make a data request on behalf of a non-member, but the member making the request is responsible for adhering to the restrictions regarding publication and non-commercial use of project data as described above.

We are restricted by privacy rules from providing raw data so we cannot release the database or a subset of raw data. We conduct the data analysis and provide summary data in the form of a report with tables and/or figures. We can also provide examples of claims that were included in the analysis so you will have an understanding of the complete clinical context underlying the numbers in the report. We work closely with you to be sure the data analysis we perform meets your needs.

Accessing ASA Closed Claims Project Data

- Data requests: Karen Posner, Ph.D. (posner@uw.edu)
- Collaboration requests: Karen Domino, M.D., M.P.H. (kdomino@uw.edu)
- Data Request Form: www.asaclosedclaims.org