



SASA

SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY OF ANAESTHESIOLOGISTS

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Official Group Of SAMA

Association Not For Gain

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Ketamine Infusion Statement

Ketamine infusions for the management of severe depression have gained popularity in recent years worldwide, with literature suggesting that it is an efficacious, viable and safe treatment modality if provided by experienced practitioners and within appropriate specialist guidelines.

South Africa has seen the introduction of ketamine infusions for which qualified sedationists are required.

Initially, this was a hospital-based treatment provided only in standard operating theatres. Over time there has been a proliferation of satellite and “stand alone” clinics offering ketamine infusions. The South African Society of Anaesthesiologists (SASA) is addressing this development with patient safety as our primary concern.

Guidelines with regard to ketamine infusions have not yet been issued by the South African Society of Psychiatrists (SASOP). Although the indications for the prescription of such treatment remain the responsibility of the treating psychiatrist, the use of ketamine, an anaesthetic drug, necessitates SASA’s comment in the interests of patient safety, as the usage of ketamine in this manner is classified under the practice of procedural sedation and anaesthesia.

The SASA Sedation Guidelines published in April 2020 ([click here](#)) clearly address the conditions necessary for the use of anaesthetic drugs during procedural sedation. The Society believes the same can be extrapolated to the use of ketamine infusions.

The following is quoted from Section 11, Page 39 of the SASA Sedation Guidelines:

“SASA recommends that general anaesthetic induction agents (propofol, ketamine, etomidate, dexmedetomidine) and the short-acting opioids (fentanyl, alfentanil, sufentanil, remifentanil) should only be used by those formally trained in anaesthesia or intensive care medicine, or by experienced sedation practitioners with anaesthetic experience who are trained in specific advanced sedation techniques. Sedation practitioners using these drugs must have at least a qualification in advanced life support.”

The qualifications and training requirements for the sedation practitioner are clearly outlined on Page 25, Section 8.1.1.

Proper history taking, examination and consent should be standard practice. Appropriate monitoring should be utilized, the basic equipment mandated as a standard of care for such a procedure is outlined on Pages 57-59.

A responsible adult must accompany the patient home, and only once the patient meets the required discharge criteria. Sedation must not be administered if an escort is not available. Carers must be advised to seek immediate help in case of complications.



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Contact details of a physician, hospital and ambulance service in the event of any procedure- or sedation-related adverse events in the first 24 hours after sedation, must be included in the information package on discharge.

The Society of Sedation Practitioners of South Africa (SOSPOSA- a SASA Special Interest Group), provides an accreditation process that can guide compliance with SASA Sedation Guidelines. It is the responsibility of any practitioner involved in these clinics to ensure that the facilities in which they practice are compliant with SASA Sedation Guidelines, SASA Practice Guidelines ([click here](#)) and SASA Private Practice Guidelines ([click here](#)), as is their own practice.

In service of patient safety, avoidance of adverse events and medico legal sanction, SASA encourages anyone involved in delivering ketamine infusions to familiarize themselves with the documents referenced herein and adhere to best practice principles espoused.