
The Physician Assistant in Academic Medicine

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Citation

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Abstract

The profession of physician assistants (PAs) has rapidly achieved an important role in American medicine. In recent years we have begun to also develop a place in the arena of academic medicine.

There is currently a trend among academic settings and teaching hospitals to include PAs in the clinical staff. PAs are providing quality medical care in facilities which have traditionally relied heavily upon physicians-in-training. PAs are providing continuity of care to patients by working as part of a multidisciplinary team, which usually includes both residents and fellows. In addition, at some facilities PAs now substitute for physicians-in-training when shortages exist. This transition of PAs into academic medicine not only advances the esteem of the profession but also exposes future physicians to practicing PAs. The trend into academic settings also provides PAs with the experience of working in environments rich in continuing educational opportunities, as well as cutting edge medicine.

As PAs move more into academics, they are on the front line of the latest advances in medicine. This environment allows many PAs the opportunity to contribute to new advances in medicine by participating in research activities. In addition, many leaders in the profession have argued that the future of PAs depends in part on continuing research regarding the utility of PAs. For these reasons, the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) has, in recent years, developed a counsel for research activities by and about PAs.

Furthermore, the national AAPA conferences are including more continuing educational opportunities for PAs interested in research.

The area of academics probably most profoundly affected by PAs is that of PA education. The teaching of PA students has become an important issue for our profession. As PA programs grow and new program are created, the need for PAs committed to education grows. PAs are also involved in the training of PAs in postgraduate specialty programs. In addition, PAs are now being called upon to actually participate in the teaching of medical students and residents. This will undoubtedly impact the acceptance of PAs by physicians and other healthcare professionals.

Due to these rapidly expanding roles for PAs in academic medicine, a journal is needed to keep pace with these changes. As a new medium for the rapid exchange of medical information, an electronic journal may best provide for these needs. This new peer-review Internet journal, by and for physician assistants, will feature original articles and multimedia presentations. It will provide a medium for the exchange of cutting edge clinical information, original research activities by PAs, and information for those involved in education.

I welcome your readership, as well as your participation by submission of original work to our journal.

References

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