
Physician Assistants in Critical Care

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Abstract

Care of the critically ill patient has traditionally been one of the most sacred domains for physicians. As the PA role expands into virtually all areas of medicine, critically ill patients in emergency departments (ED) and intensive care units (ICU) are more frequently encountering PAs. The movement of PAs into most clinical settings is probably due to a variety of forces at play in modern American medicine. However, some factors may be more unique to the critical care environment.

Since critically ill patients require meticulous detail in regards to the review of their medical history, physical assessment, invasive monitoring data and multiple diagnostic test results, time is often an essential component of their care. Therefore, this area of medicine is one in which the concept of a mid level provider working under the supervision and in collaboration with a physician may be especially fruitful.

In addition, critically ill patients are frequently treated in academic settings by physicians-in-training who are themselves supervised by faculty physicians. With the focus of physician training shifting towards primary care, many academic facilities are experiencing shortages of clinicians in EDs and ICUs. More and more hospitals are turning to PAs to help fill this need.

As the PA role in the care of the critical ill patient expands, more continuing education will be needed in critical care. This section of The Internet Journal of Academic Physician Assistants will provide clinically relevant articles on the management of the critically ill patient. The intention being that this information will be useful to a variety of physician assistants who routinely, or on occasion, provide care for those critically ill.

References

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