

Physician Assistants (PAs) Meet Health Care Needs Across the Spectrum

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As the demand for medical, surgical and health promotion services increase in the United States and globally, it is important to know how various members of the health care team can increase access, engage patients and help contain costs. Physician Assistants (PAs) practice medicine in a broad range of settings, i.e. community-based and private practices, acute care centers and hospitals, etc. and in a variety of disciplines, i.e. family medicine, cardiovascular surgery, orthopedics and beyond. There are close to 102,000 certified PAs practicing in the United States today. Current data on the Physician Assistant workforce demonstrate that certified PAs contribute to the health care landscape in broad and meaningful ways.

This presentation will highlight findings of 2014 Statistical Profile of Certified Physician Assistants, an Annual Report of the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA). The NCCPA PA Professional Profile, the dynamic database from which much of the information in this presentation is drawn, represents demographic and practice data on currently certified PAs.

Objective: Information presented will inform International Workforce Collaborative participants of the current status of PA practice in the US, including PA demographics, distribution and depth of practice of certified PAs and how they can provide effective medical services in varied clinical settings.

Methods: As of December 31, 2014, 90,790 of the 101,977 NCCPA certified PAs provided responses for at least a portion of the PA Professional Profile, yielding an overall response rate of 89.0%. The data provided in this presentation have been aggregated from the individual response data entered into the Professional Profile and other NCCPA data gathering efforts. Responses were examined for consistency and potential errors. In cases of obvious error or inconclusive data, the responses were not included in the analysis. The number of responses to individual items varies due to differing response rates or due to the data being removed for reasons previously noted. Analyses of the data consist primarily of descriptive statistics.

Results: Certified PAs practice in every state in the US and PA play a key role in rural and underserved areas. Internationally, PAs provide medical care to the U.S. military and state department employees, as well as to local residents.

NCCPA is the only certifying organization for PAs in the United States. Established as a not-for-profit organization in 1974, NCCPA is dedicated to providing certification programs that reflect standards for clinical knowledge, clinical reasoning and other medical skills and professional behaviors required upon entry into practice and throughout the careers of PAs. All U.S. states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. territories have decided to rely on NCCPA certification as one of the criteria for licensure or regulation of PAs.

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