Physician Assistant Workforce: Growing Our Own ND Professionals

Jeanie McHugo, PhD, PA-C
Jay Metzger, MPAS, PA-C
Heidi Olson Fitzgerald, BSN, PA-C

Objectives

• **Objective 1:** At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to describe the role of the Physician Assistant as it relates to a rural practice in ND.

• **Objective 2:** At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to understand the current status of the Physician Assistant workforce in North Dakota based on the PA workforce data project.

• **Objective 3:** At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to discuss the projected growth of the PA profession and propose PA education solutions resulting in increased workforce and overall access to quality health care.

What’s the Issue?

Health Care Shortages
Physician Assistants:
PArt of the Solution

How can PAs help?

• Practice medicine and prescribe medication in every medical and surgical specialty and setting
• PAs are educated with the medical model at the graduate level
• PAs are required to recertify every 10 years and complete 100 hours of continuing medical education every two years

Role of the Physician Assistant

• PAs manage the full scope of patient care, often handling patients with multiple comorbidities.
• PAs conduct physical exams, assist in surgery, diagnose and treat illnesses, order and interpret tests, counsel on preventive healthcare, prescribe medications and more.

Role of the Physician Assistant

• Scope of practice is determined by their education and experience (and state law)
• Optimally, PAs practice at the top of their education, training and experience
• PAs work on healthcare teams to provide medical care
• PAs collaborate with physicians and all members of the healthcare team.
In North Dakota…..

• PA Professional Development
• Workforce Survey (Fall 2014)
  • 306 licensed PAs in ND
  • 293 possible respondents
  • 95/293 completed (32.4% response rate)
    • Mean age of 45 (37 years nationally)
    • Age range from 27-81 years
    • Avg length of time in practice – 13 years

Workforce Survey: Rurality and Education

• Of the respondents:
  • 62% self-reported childhood in a rural area (<10K)
  • 73% graduated from a ND high school (25% MN & SD)
  • 70% received undergraduate degree in ND (24% MN & SD)
  • 52% received PA degree from ND

UND PA Program now has a two track admission structure with broadened admission criteria to increase ND applicants.

Workforce Survey: Rurality and Education

Current Workforce Location

• 63% experienced rural clerkship during education
  • 28% obtained employment in rural area
  • 45% gained employment from their clinical preceptor (60% from the UND Program)
  • 26% stayed in rural practice communities
Workforce Survey: Clinical Characteristics

- 48% work in primary care (27.7% nationally)
  - 35% family medicine
  - 8% internal medicine/geriatrics
  - 5% urgent care
- Other areas include emergency medicine, hospital medicine, general surgery, orthopedics, women’s health
- 55% work in an outpatient group practice
- 10% work in hospital settings
- Others include FQHC, solo practice, nursing home, urgent care

Professional Growth

- Over 100,000 certified PAs in 2014—more than doubled in the past 10 years. Approximately 43,500 PAs in 2003. (NCCPA)
- Employment projected to grow 38% from 2012 to 2022, much faster than the 11% national average. (BLS)
- 41% growth rate in accredited PA programs in past 10 years in the U.S. Currently, there are 196 programs, whereas in 2004, there were 135 programs. (ARC-PA)
- ARC-PA predicts 273 PA programs to exist by 2020 which calculates to a 38% growth rate in the next 5 years. (ARC-PA)

Recruiting and Retaining PAs

- Encouragement of clinical training in rural areas (grow your own)
- Educating pipeline programs
- Providing financial assistance for education
- Financial incentives for new graduates
- Competitive employment opportunities, combined with a supportive community environment
- Integral role to increase a physicians' efficiency
Making an Impact

- Increase access to healthcare
- Provide quality care and positively impact patient outcomes
- Educated, by design, to seamlessly work in a team-based model of care
- Educated and recertify as medical generalists
- One of the most versatile healthcare providers
- Manage patient care coordination and provide clinical preventive services
- Reported high job satisfaction.

UND Program Graduate Survey
(Classes of 2010 & 2012)

Reside in same city or town where they graduated (trained and retained as medical providers in home areas)
- 82%

Practicing in primary care (includes family medicine, urgent care, internal medicine, and women’s health)
- 67%

Practicing in a rural area (defined as 25,000 or less population)
- 46%

In Summary....

- Consider physician/PA teams as an integral part of the rural health care system
- Adequate incentives and reimbursements
  - Loan forgiveness programs
  - NHSC promotion
  - Rural PA Scholarships
  - Income tax credits
  - Shortage area bonuses
- Work with health insurance companies
- Explore efforts to improve physician/PA team approach to health care to increase access to quality health care in rural communities
References


Thank you!!