



Call for Comments, Collegiality and Consideration of the Future of the PA Profession

by Dawn Morton-Rias, Ed.D, PA-C (NCCPA President/CEO) and Denni Woodmansee, MS, PA-C (NCCPA Board Chair)

For the last few months, NCCPA has been working to help PAs understand a proposed recertification exam model under consideration by our Board of Directors.

Our goal has been to ensure that all PAs have the opportunity to learn and think about what the proposed changes are and what they may mean for themselves today and for the profession into the future.

Health care continues to change, which you know because you live it. New diseases emerge, evaluation and treatment options evolve, and scientific understanding deepens. Technology presents new opportunities and new challenges in the care and management of patients across the spectrum. Amidst this change, our profession continues to grow and thrive because we have adapted and changed. PAs provide comprehensive care in

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In The News

At NCCPA, we work to promote the role, impact and qualifications of PAs in many ways including through the media. Here are some recent results.

all disciplines. PAs are working more autonomously than we did 40, 30, 20 or even 10 years ago. Many are treating the same complex constellation of comorbidities as their physician partners. We are successful as a profession by every measure.

Some look at that success and say: *Clearly what we are doing has worked. Why change it?* Others may look at that success and say: *Will our approach that has worked well in the past suffice for the future? Is our process for certification adequate for assessing what PAs do today?*

Like it or not, we live in an era of increasing transparency, refined scrutiny and expanding accountability. We believe that this proposed recertification exam model better assesses what PAs actually do and positions the profession to withstand that scrutiny.

When we first decided to explore changes to PANRE, we did so with a close eye on the current evolution in healthcare. We then looked at what PAs are actually doing in clinical practice, across the many specialties in which they work and across the various stages of the career span. We built a new team of experts in assessment methods and cognitive psychology at NCCPA and developed new partnerships with some of the top leaders in the assessment and certification field. Why? Because we wanted to find *a more relevant, meaningful and impactful recertification process.*

Given what the data demonstrated about the current state of PA practice and what the experts had to say about the current state of assessment science, we arrived at a clear conclusion: *we can make the recertification process better.*

Then we began a year-long process of seeking input from PAs about *how* to do that: first with focus groups, then with surveys and now with even more surveys and dialogue with stakeholders.

We know there is much to absorb and consider, and we know not everyone agrees with the proposed changes. We encourage and welcome the opportunity to inform consideration of the proposed model, discuss, vet and resolve those issues in a respectful and collegial manner; that's just what professional colleagues should do. What concerns us is that much of what is being written by others is inaccurate, based on fear, or perhaps other motivations.

Also, the single most important consideration seems to be getting lost in this debate: What is best for patients?

Please do not let anyone dissuade you from actually participating in this process in an informed, productive way.

- NCCPA President & CEO Dawn Morton-Rias wrote in *Physicians Practice* about [2016 Healthcare Trends: How Certified PAs Make a Difference](#).
- NCCPA published a new *Statistical Report of Certified PAs by State*, announced in a national press release: [PAs Increase Access for Bilingual Medicare/Medicaid Patients](#).
- *HealthLeaders* wrote about that report in [Physician Assistants Salaries and Debt Detailed](#).
- *Forbes* published an article based on the report: [Physician Assistant Pay Reaches \\$100K Annually](#).
- *Forbes* then followed that up with [Physician Assistant Demand Rivals that of Primary Care Doctors](#).
- Certified PA Kelly Calero wrote in *Physicians Practice* about how [PAs Assist Post-Surgical Patients with Goal Setting](#).

Want to get involved? If you have a great article idea or a story to share, contact PR manager, Mary Rittle, at maryr@nccpa.net.



We have just published a new [“Issues and Answers”](#) document in which we address concerns, misstatements and fears.

We continue to provide information about the model under consideration on our website and invite you to explore it further to find out more. Then, if you haven't done so already, please participate in the survey we are conducting this month to gather YOUR perspectives. **Within the next 24 hours, those who haven't already completed the survey will receive a reminder email with a link to the survey form.**

Change is the only constant in life, and we appreciate the uneasiness that it provokes. As certified PAs, we and our colleagues, friends, and contemporaries would be affected by these changes. Let's each of us stop to understand the proposal and thoughtfully consider what is best for our profession and for the patients we serve.

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New PA-C Emeritus Designation Coming in 2016

This year NCCPA will introduce a new designation to honor PAs who have retired from clinical practice after demonstrating longstanding commitment to lifelong learning, patient care and the certification process.

Certified PAs who have reached the age of 60 -- or who are unable to practice as a PA due to a permanent disability -- will be eligible to apply for the PA-C Emeritus designation, which will be awarded to applicants who have been certified at least 20 cumulative years during their PA career; have no reportable actions in their NCCPA disciplinary history and no NCCPA disciplinary matter in any stage of review; submit satisfactory documentation of their retirement from clinical practice; and submit satisfactory documentation either that they have reached age 60 or that they have retired from practice due to permanent disability and have qualified for federal Social Security Disability Insurance benefits and/or disability retirement or long-term disability benefits.

NCCPA Board member Kevin Lohenry, PhD, PA-C, DFAAPA helped develop the PA-C Emeritus concept. He says, "We wanted a way to recognize those who have upheld the high standards of the PA profession through to retirement and to give those



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Feedback and questions are always welcome. Send general inquiries and comments to nccpa@nccpa.net and messages about the new recertification exam model to newpanre@nccpa.net. Or contact our [President/CEO](#).

deserving PAs a designation that honors their long and upstanding history as a certified PA.”

It is important to note that the PA-C Emeritus designation is not the equivalent of PA-C certification, and those designated as PA-C Emeritus are not considered certified by NCCPA. Given that, the PA-C Emeritus designation may not be used in any clinical setting or in the context of any clinically-related interaction, including clinical volunteer service.

The application process will be available this summer. The application fee will be \$50, and the PA-C Emeritus designation will be maintained on two-year, calendar year cycles. Maintenance will require completion of a reapplication process that will include attestation that the PA-C Emeritus designee continues to meet the requirements for initial eligibility.

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Be the CHANGE with up to \$1,000 in nccPA Health Foundation Grant Funding

Apply to the nccPA Health Foundation for up to \$1,000 in funding as part of its new “Be the CHANGE” grants program to **C**reate **H**ealth **A**ccess **N**ow for **G**reater **E**quity.

As of December 31, 2015, the Health Resources and Service Administration (HRSA) reported staggering numbers of people live in areas where it is difficult to access primary medical care (more than 61 million), dental care (more than 48 million), and mental health care (nearly 98 million). These numbers underscore how unequal access to care contributes to health disparities.

The nccPA Health Foundation believes passionately that certified PAs are critical to ensuring high quality, accessible health care.

“The statistics describing access to care are staggering; but if we each commit to a change, we can make a big impact,” said Dawn Morton-Rias, Ed.D, PA-C, NCCPA and Foundation President and CEO. “We challenge PAs to identify the difference you can make, whether it’s providing patient education, screenings, or delivering care to those who might not otherwise have access to it.”

Certified PAs, PA organizations, and PA students may apply for funding; and activities may take place within PA, community-

based, or other social organizations. Applications will be considered as they are received and awarded based on merit, in amounts up to \$1,000 until all funds are expended.

“This grant money is part of our investment in PAs as community leaders that are equipped to promote health through their practice and outreach efforts,” said Foundation Board Chair Cynthia B. Lord, MHS, PA-C. “Everyone should have the opportunity to reach optimal health, and we believe PAs can lead the way to CHANGE in their communities.”

Are you ready to CHANGE? Review the [grant guidelines](#), and apply to make a difference in your community.

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Two Certified PAs Join the nccPA Health Foundation Board

In February, the NCCPA Board of Directors elected Nela DeChurch, MPAS, PA-C and Kathleen Ehrhardt, MMS, PA-C, to serve on the nccPA Health Foundation's Board of Directors.

“I'm so pleased to welcome our new directors, who join the Foundation as we begin implementation of a three-year strategic framework that includes new initiatives to advance the role of certified PAs to improve health,” said Cynthia B. Lord, MHS, PA-C, chair of the nccPA Health Foundation Board of Directors. “We look forward to the insights and expertise these new members will provide about opportunities to support our work.”

The Foundation received an overwhelming response to its call for candidates last fall, and the directors were chosen through a rigorous process that evaluated how each candidate would complement and extend the reach of the existing Board. The directors will serve for three years through December 31, 2018.

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Keeping up with the PA History Society!

Check out the latest features on the PAHx website homepage

along with expanded exhibits throughout the site. Currently, the Society is featuring notable African American PAs in celebration of **Black History Month**. Next month, the Society will pay tribute to outstanding female PAs, in recognition of **Women's History Month**. History is always being made... find out more by regularly visiting the PA History Society's [website](#).



The Society's illustrated history book is an excellent way to learn about incredible PA profession, along with some of the people, places and events that have shaped the history of this growing profession...and it also makes a terrific gift! [Order forms](#) are available online.



If you haven't already done so, be sure to "like" PA History on [Facebook](#) to receive updates, and to try your hand with PA history trivia!

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The National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants is dedicated to serving the interest of the public. We do so with a passionate belief that certified physician assistants are essential members of the health care delivery team who provide millions access to more affordable, high quality health care.