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As chair of the Board of Directors of the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA), and as a certified PA for more than 30 years, I read with great interest your March 2018 article: "Will You See an Actual Doctor the Next Time You Go to the Doctor?"

Educating consumers on what PAs bring to healthcare today is vitally important. I'd like to share a few critical points.

1. **Today's 123,000 certified PAs are educated at the master's degree level and maintain certification through a rigorous process.** This includes earning substantial CME and passing medical exams/assessments that objectively measure PAs clinical knowledge.
2. **Over 70% of PAs work in specialties outside of primary care.** NCCPA publishes the [Statistical Profile of Certified PAs](#), which shows that PAs work in every specialty and clinical setting. We manage patients with routine and complex illnesses, and work in every clinical discipline, from cardiovascular surgery to oncology. You will find certified PAs employed in every delivery setting, from hospitals to urgent care centers, ERs to rural clinics and mental health facilities.
3. **Their broad-based education, professional dedication and commitment to lifelong learning helps PAs provide outstanding healthcare.** A 2017 article in the [Journal of Clinical Outcomes Management](#), which compared care led by physician assistants with care led by doctors, showed virtually no difference in patient mortality, hospital readmissions, lengths of stay, and consults with specialists.
4. **PAs are authorized to prescribe medications,** and in many states, hold DEA licenses (allowing them to prescribe narcotics, as well as medications to help treat opioid overdoses, an important step in our nation's effort to battle the opioid epidemic).
5. **Specialty PAs can earn an additional credential.** NCCPA offers Certificates of Added Qualifications (CAQ) in seven specialties, requiring additional experience, CME, and testing in specialties such as Emergency Medicine, Orthopaedic Surgery, and Psychiatry.
6. **Many PAs today practice autonomously on teams with physicians.** Physician "supervision" really means being available to a PA for consultation, if necessary. Depending on state law, the physician may be in the next room, a different building or miles away. Many states are exploring legislative and regulatory changes designed to reduce barriers to PA practice and greater patient access to quality care.
7. **Patients welcome and value the care provided by PAs.** A [2014 patient survey](#) found that 94% were willing to be seen by a PA instead of a physician.
8. In short, certified PAs are proven and prepared providers who are committed to helping consumers address their healthcare needs and to helping our nation improve access to the highest quality healthcare services.

The NCCPA CEO Dawn Morton-Rias and I remain available to share more of the PA story with you so that your readers are aware of the tremendous impact that PAs are having on patient care and the health care industry.

Thank you for your time.

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Board Chair, NCCPA