



Physician and PA Approach Patient Care as Team in Emergency Medicine

Not quite a year has passed since Dr. Michael Lipscomb, director of the emergency department at the North Fulton Hospital Trauma Center in Roswell, Ga., and Christopher Nickum, PA-C, began working together, and they already operate as a strong, seamless team that allows them to treat the diverse patient population that comes through the hospital doors.

“PAs extend the coverage of the physician,” says Dr. Lipscomb, who has worked with PAs for over 16 years. “When they’re utilized on healthcare teams, patients can be seen more quickly and efficiently. That’s extremely important, especially in emergency medicine.”

More often than not, patients are willing to be seen by a PA if that means a shorter waiting time. “If a patient has a question as to what a PA is or what we can do, I’ll take the time to explain it to them so that they’re comfortable,” says Nickum. “Patients perceive me as someone who, in the end, can take care of them and their unique situation, and that’s what patients really want to know.”

Together, Dr. Lipscomb and Nickum evaluate patients, discern the diagnosis, and implement the treatment. “We get to witness the difference that our team approach to medicine makes in their lives,” says Nickum.

Because of the wide range of patient cases from mild to critical that are presented in the emergency room, Dr. Lipscomb says it’s very important to work with providers who are at the “top end of their field.” Dr. Lipscomb is confident in Nickum’s ability to provide emergency care for their patients, and adds that “Chris is very experienced, and knows when to ask questions.”

Nickum, who was first certified by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA) in 1996, appreciates their collaborative relationship and feels fortunate to be a part of Dr. Lipscomb’s team. “He is a great guy to work with; he’s down-to-earth, easy to get along with, encourages open communication and facilitates growth and learning,” says Nickum. “All of these things come together to benefit the patients.”

Dr. Lipscomb and Nickum aren’t the only ones who recognize the value of the physician-PA team approach to emergency care. Nickum states that “patients like hearing that we’re working on their case as a team. They really appreciate that approach because they feel their health is taken seriously and considered carefully, and it always is.”

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