

PA Practice Patterns & Certification



**A National Commission
on Certification
of Physician Assistants
presentation to the New
Mexico Medical Board**

May 2017

Presentation Outline

- **About NCCPA**
- **PA Practice Patterns in New Mexico**
- **PA Certification & Certification Maintenance**

About NCCPA

- Only national certifying body for PAs
- Certifying PAs since 1975
- Accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies
- **Our purpose:** to provide 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.

Our Board of Directors

11 PAs, 4 physicians and 2 public members,
including nominees from:

- American Academies of:
 - Pediatrics
 - PAs
- American College of Physicians
- American Medical Association
- American Osteopathic Association
- **Federation of State Medical Boards**
- PA Education Association

PA Involvement with NCCPA Adds Up!

- **51** PA item writers serve on **item writing committees**, writing questions that appear on PANCE, PANRE and the CAQ exams
- In 2016, NCCPA hosted **58 PA team meetings** to **develop and validate exam questions, set passing standards**
- **59** PAs spent three days with us working to identify content that represents **core medical knowledge**



PA Involvement With NCCPA

- **72** PAs served on 2015 **Practice Analysis workgroups**, helping identify the knowledge, skills and abilities that were included on that survey
- Approximately **16,000** PAs responded to the **Practice Analysis survey**
- Nearly **100,000** PAs have completed the **PA Professional Profile**
- In 2016, **55** PAs participated in a 3-day **focus group** to talk about PANRE
- More than **30,000** participated in **nationwide survey of all Certified PAs about proposed new PANRE model**



PA
Practice
Patterns in
New
Mexico



NOTE TO THOSE VIEWING THIS SAMPLE PRESENTATION:

At this point in the presentation, we refer to handouts – the state-specific pages from NCCPA's most recent [Statistical Profile of Certified Physician Assistants by State](#) where we highlight the breadth and depth of PA impact in the state.

New Mexico PA Pipeline

Accredited
Programs:



Where Will These PAs Work?

Location of Position Accepted	Number
Area where grew up	1,123
Area where PA program located	1,082
Area lived in prior to attending PA program	892
Area where want to live	688
Rural area	440
Other area	322
Urban medically underserved area	230

Data from 2015 Statistical Profile of Recently Certified Physician Assistants



Certification & Certification Maintenance Process

Initial Certification

1. Graduate from an accredited PA program
2. Pass the Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination (PANCE)
 - Broad-based assessment of medical and surgical knowledge
 - Offered year-round at testing centers throughout the US and abroad
 - Must pass within six attempts or six years (whichever comes first)

Certification Maintenance Process

- 100 CME credits every two years
 - 50 Category 1 credits
 - Weighted credit for self-assessment and performance improvement CME
- Physician Assistant National Recertifying Exam (PANRE) every 10 years



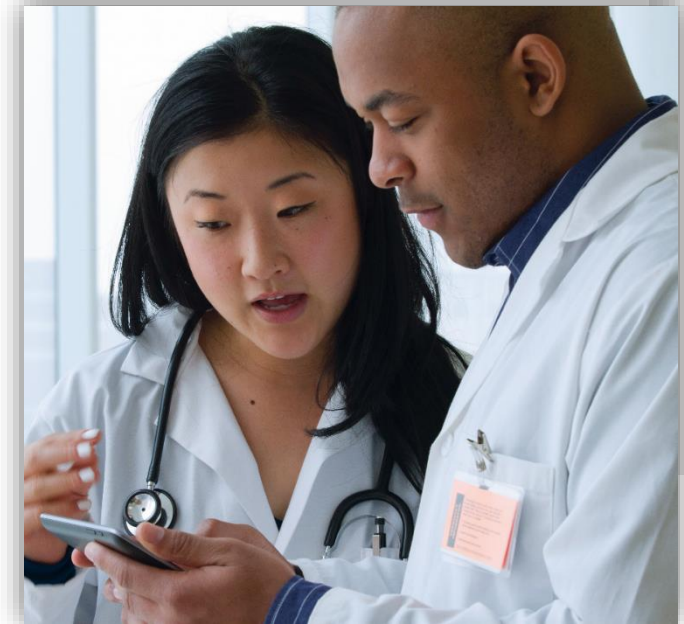
NCCPA's Responsibility

It is critical to our mission to provide a certification/recertification program that is:

- meaningful and relevant; and
- provides assurance for patients, employers, state licensing boards, and others regarding PAs' knowledge and skills.

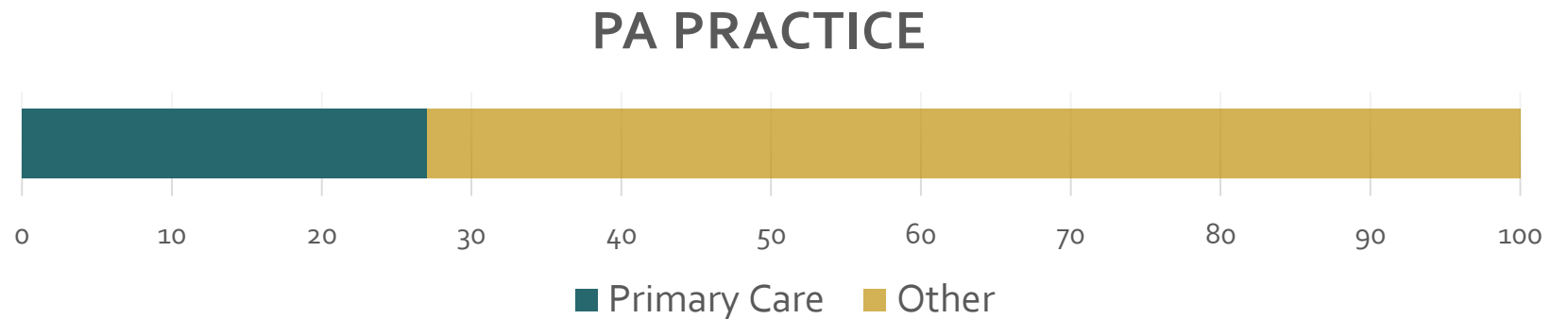
To do this, we must continuously monitor and evolve the certification process because things change:

- Advances in technology
- Rapid changes in medicine
- Changes in the PA profession



Our Purpose in this Endeavor

- We believe that the recertification exam should be **relevant to PAs' practice** and that the preparation for that exam should **help PAs maintain current knowledge**.
- Therefore we committed to a serious exploration of whether and how the current PANRE could be improved given that greater than 70% are now practicing outside of primary care.



Our Underpinning Principles

1. Our first concern has been the public's interest as we worked to determine how we most effectively can deliver a recertification exam process that supports delivery of high quality, affordable, accessible health care.
2. To support the flexibility PAs have to change specialties during their career span and to work in multiple specialties concurrently, it is important to maintain the generalist nature of the PA-C credential.



Key Messages from the Public Comment Period

- PAs are very concerned about maintaining their ability to change specialties and do not want to see that threatened.
- PAs are very concerned about the cost and time required to maintain certification (CME and exam requirements).
- **Exams matter to the public.**

Key Messages from the Public Comment Period

Public survey conducted by the
Citizens Advocacy Center:

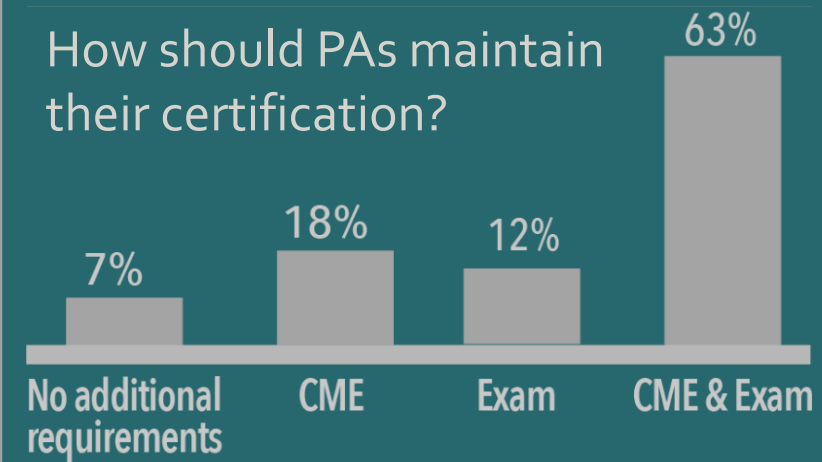
Should all PAs be tested
on general medical
knowledge?

97%
say "YES"

95%
say "YES"

Should all PAs be
tested on the specialty
in which they work?

How should PAs maintain
their certification?



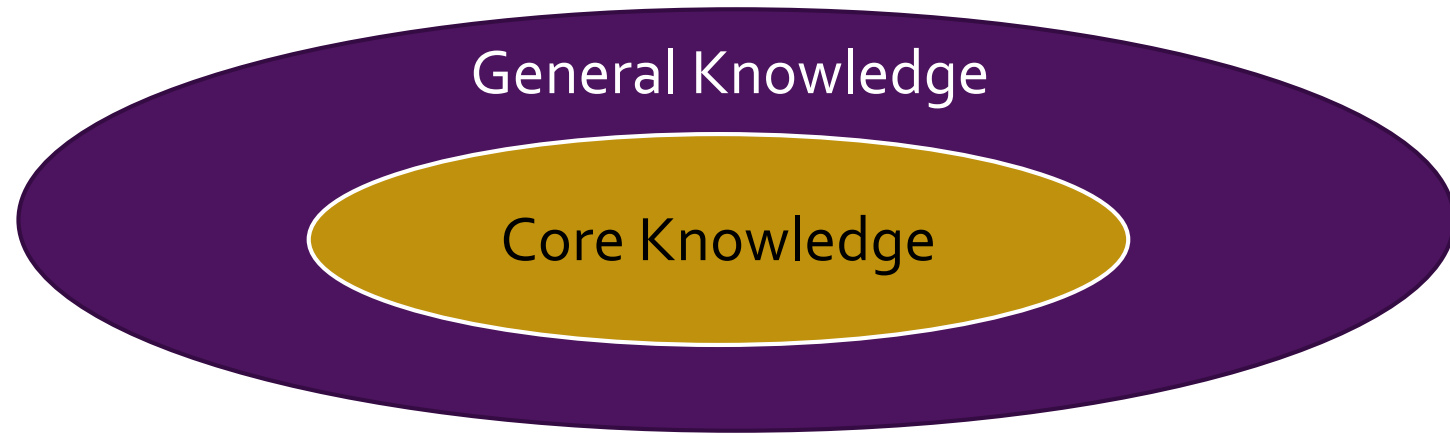
Data Support Periodic Retesting

- More than 20% of core information guiding clinical practice changes within one year.
- Performance on assessments of medical knowledge declines over time.
- Testing and preparing for tests have shown to be more effective at enhancing retention of medical knowledge than study alone.
- Testing provides an important mechanism for identifying the small number of health care providers who are unable to demonstrate an adequate level of medical knowledge for safe practice.
- Higher exam scores have been associated with improved quality of patient care.

Our Response

Phased Approach

- We launched an effort to define “core medical knowledge” so we can increase PANRE’s focus on assessing core knowledge that is foundational to all PA practice.

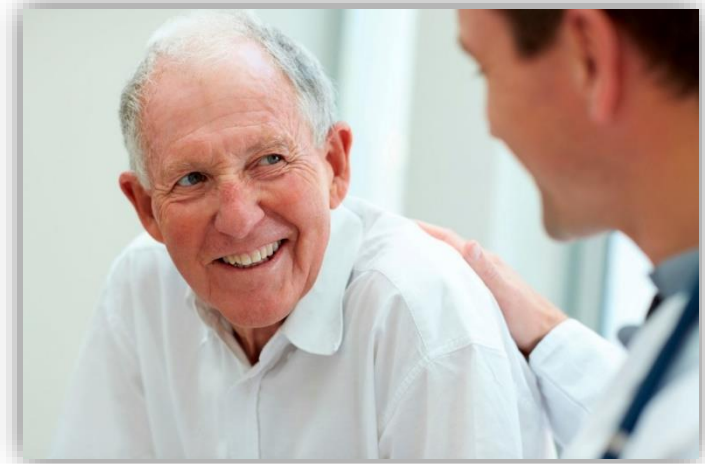


- NCCPA will pilot alternatives to the high stakes recertification exam by 2020.

More on Our Response

To strengthen our position that the PA-C should continue to be viewed as and relied on as a generalist credential:

- The “core medical knowledge” assessment will be the capstone event of the 10-year cycle.
- We will continue to explore other ways to integrate “practice-related” elements into the process.



Thank you!

