



*For immediate release*

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## **Certified PAs at the Forefront of 2019 Health Care Trends**

**Johns Creek, GA, Dec. 13, 2018** – As 2018 comes to a close, clear trends in health care are emerging that will increasingly require the services of Certified PAs. These include significant changes in technology, scope of practice, and specialization that will alter the way health care is delivered and who delivers it.

“Health care is fluid today, influenced not only by providers and patients but by insurers, policy makers and the government as well,” says Dawn Morton-Rias, Ed.D, PA-C, and President and CEO of the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA). “The exploding demand for services and the move to a value-based care model have created an environment ripe for a PA’s education and skills.”

Current trends that are causing employers to absorb the PA workforce quickly include:

**PAs are moving toward specialties outside primary care.** As physicians have moved into specialties to meet the needs of patients, PAs have followed. Today over 70 percent of PAs work outside primary care — including approximately 18 percent in surgical specialties, 13 percent in emergency medicine; 4 percent in dermatology and 3 percent in hospital medicine. About 40 percent work in an office-based practice and 40 percent in hospitals, with the remaining in many settings including government facilities, urgent care offices, community health centers and rural clinics.

**PA scope of practice is increasing.** State legislatures are looking at ways to remove barriers to care so that more patients have access to a qualified health provider. Some of the barriers under consideration include allowing PAs to have full prescriptive authority (they do in 44 states); eliminating the number of PAs that a physician can supervise (14 states have no limit) and having scope of practice determined at the employer practice level versus being mandated by the state. This workforce model would allow physicians and PAs to quickly adapt to local care needs.

**PAs are embracing new technologies to provide access to care.** This means they are involved in creating, implementing and using applications like telehealth and virtual visits. [Telehealth is growing at 13 percent a year](#) and PAs are working in rural and underserved areas where it will most likely be deployed. PAs can communicate with physicians beyond phone/text using photos, diagnostic images, videos, and EHRs. The PA profession is a young one with a median age of 38. They are prime users of new technology and most able to communicate the use and relevance to their patients.

**Increased employment in the field of hospice and palliative care.** The use of hospice is increasing and since [14.5percent of the population is now over 65](#), it’s expected that more patients will require palliative and end-of-life care. In 2018, the Medicare Patient Access to Hospice Act was passed recognizing PAs as providers of a multi-disciplinary team for advanced illness care. Beginning in 2019, PAs will be recognized as hospice providers and Medicare will reimburse their hospice services. Whereas

hospice care was primarily done in hospitals in the past, PAs will be able to help distribute this care to other care settings including the home.

**Increased employment in the field of mental health.** According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, one in five adults in the U.S. has a mental illness. A serious shortage of psychiatrists across the country increasingly begs for PAs to step up to help treat these patients. PAs are taking on more of the psychiatric case load. The number of Certified PAs in psychiatry has doubled to over 1,300 in five years and the number continues to grow. Some have earned a specialty credential, the Certificate of Added Qualifications (CAQ) in Psychiatry, which means they have taken additional continuing education and passed a national exam.

**PAs are moving into leadership positions.** As the job market intensifies, PAs are also looking for a seat at the leadership table. According to a 2017 survey by the American Academy of PAs, one-third of PAs believe they are now in a position of leadership, either formally or informally. Medical practices may appoint a head PA who is involved in onboarding and training new PAs. In hospitals and health care systems, many departments have a lead PA, and there are a growing number appointed to committees and strategic planning groups. Usually a PA and an NP will be appointed Directors/Vice Presidents in charge of Advanced Practice Providers. As integral members of the health care team, their voices add value to policy decisions.

#### **About the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants**

The National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA) is the only certifying organization for physician assistants (PAs) in the United States. The PA-C credential is awarded by NCCPA to PAs who fulfill certification, certification maintenance and recertification requirements. There are more than 123,000 certified PAs in the U.S. today. NCCPA also administers the Certificate of Added Qualifications (CAQ) program for experienced, Certified PAs practicing in seven specialties. For more information about Certified PAs, visit [www.PAsDoThat.net](http://www.PAsDoThat.net).