

## **Recertification Cycle Extension and Specialty Credentialing of Physician Assistants**

Changes are occurring within the certification process for Physician Assistants (PAs), including the possibility of extending the recertification cycle to ten years and PAs earning specialty certification. These changes have been proposed with little feedback of currently practicing PAs.

A resolution was proposed to the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) House of Delegates to suggest modification of the current recertification process. Key aspects of this resolution include extending the recertification exam cycle and eliminating end pointing, thereby allowing unlimited attempts. Therefore, failure of the exam would not threaten PAs' ability to practice. Little is known about the opinions of practicing PAs regarding this topic of recertification.

Physicians' recertification requires passing an exam every ten years. They are allowed unlimited attempts and failure of the examination does not affect eligibility for licensure. The PA profession implemented the six-year recertification cycle to gain the respect of the public and fellow medical practitioners. PAs are now an integral member of the healthcare team. PA education is modeled after that of physicians and some policymakers believe that PA recertification should parallel physicians and be changed to a ten-year recertification cycle.

The NCCPA board has approved a specific model for specialty certification programs, allowing PAs to become certified in certain specialties, including Emergency Medicine, Orthopedics, and Nephrology. Development toward specialized education and certification carries the potential to greatly alter the PA profession. Current AAPA policies do not support a movement toward specialty certification. The absence of a study on the issue presents a significant void.

Presently, no data has been collected regarding PAs' opinion on the proposed resolution on recertification or the issue of specialty certification. Your opinion is important; please complete the short survey to help us generate data that reflects your desires.

The survey can be accessed at - <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NCCPA>

This research is being undertaken by investigators at the Medical University of South Carolina. Dr. Paul Jacques, President-Elect of the South Carolina Academy of Physician Assistants, with a group of MUSC PA students, will be collecting, analyzing, and hoping to present the findings at the AAPA conference in May of 2010. This short survey has been approved by the MUSC Institutional Review Board and should take approximately 5 minutes to complete. Your responses will be kept confidential and is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns about the survey please contact Paul F. Jacques, DHSc, PA-C at 843-792-2649 or jacquesp@musc.edu.

Sincerely,

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