

Role of Postgraduate Residency Training on Physician Assistants' Job Responsibilities

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Currently, a PA is authorized to practice in any medical specialty but must remain within the scope of practice designated by supervising physicians. However, if a specialty field is pursued, additional training may be required (AAPA, 2002). Additional training is attained through postgraduate residency programs and clinical on-site training (AAPA, 2002). According to David Asprey, former president of the Association of Physician Assistant Programs, and Dr. Lelia Helms, University of Iowa College of Education, "With the trend towards increasing PA specialization and practice autonomy, greater numbers of PAs have sought out formal postgraduate training prior to entering the specialty of their choice or to transferring from one specialty to another" (1998, p.125). The value and role of postgraduate residency programs may impact the issue of PA specialization. Thus, the development of specialty recognition, including specialty examinations has been proposed (NCCPA, 2006b). By understanding postgraduate residencies affects on practice and job responsibilities, the NCCPA may formulate specialty education and recognition for specialty PAs in the future. The purpose of this study was to examine the differences in job responsibilities between PAs who have completed a postgraduate surgical residency versus PAs who have not completed a postgraduate surgical residency. To obtain information, a cross sectional study with a web-based survey was conducted to analyze job responsibilities for surgical PAs in Michigan. The survey was distributed through the Michigan Academy of Physician Assistants. Data was gathered on job responsibilities, hours worked, and criteria for attending a program. Additional questions regarding other PA professional responsibilities (i.e. taking call and precepting PA and medical students) were also addressed. Analysis was completed using SPSS 14.0. No difference in job responsibilities was seen between the two groups. There was a significant difference found in the hours worked per week between the two groups. The residency trained PAs felt that their criteria for attending a program were met and they would attend a residency program again.