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**PAEA President's Report to the
AAPA House of Delegates**

May 2007

Thank you for the opportunity to report to the Academy leadership on the activities of the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA). As a program director, medical educator, and now president of PAEA (formerly APAP), I appreciate the vision and leadership the House of Delegates provides for the profession and the opportunity this meeting affords to positively influence the profession's future.

A recently published editorial in the *PAEA Journal of Physician Assistant Education* calls for the PA education community to examine impending changes in its health care delivery system and corresponding implications for PA practice. It is clear that now is the time to review our educational model with a particular focus directed towards clinical training. This will be necessary to keep up with these dynamic changes. Today I would like to address an important issue that will present ongoing challenges in the coming years, most notably, the continued growth of the profession and the corresponding lack of availability of preceptors and clinical sites. I would argue that this issue can best be addressed by building and strengthening our partnerships across the PA profession.

Given the current realities of the health care workforce, we face a growing demand to increase the number of PAs educated in our nation's programs. As you know, a shortfall of up to 200,000 physicians has been projected for the year 2020. In response, the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) has recommended a 30 percent increase in the number of U.S. medical school graduates over the next 10 years. However, this is expected to offset just a portion of the shortfall. In his keynote address at the 2006 PAEA Education Forum, Ed Salsberg, director of the AAMC's Center for Workforce Studies, acknowledged that the PA profession is well positioned to supply much of the needed health care workforce.

Data from the 2006 PAEA Program Expansion Survey showed that current PA programs are willing and invested in helping to meet this need. The survey documented a projected enrollment increase of 11 percent over the next five years among the 119 (of 134) accredited programs that responded to the survey. Programs also responded that they would consider further increases, if possible. The survey results also highlighted the critical barrier facing programs considering expansion — the lack of availability of and competition for clinical training sites and preceptors.

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New energy and focus directed towards building relationships across organizations can help us meet this challenge. An example is the joint work of the PAEA Faculty Development Institute and the AAPA Leadership and Professional Development Council, which have been working to create collaborative professional leadership activities. Preceptor resources are also being developed as part of an interdisciplinary effort across the academic community of the Federation of Associations of Schools of the Health Professions, including pharmacy, dentistry, and osteopathic medicine schools. However, this is only the beginning; and at the leadership level and across PA organizations, more needs to be done. We need to work together to be proactive in addressing our clinical education needs on a variety of fronts in order to continue to have a strong education foundation for the next generation of PAs.

I am happy to report that the supply of qualified applicants to the profession has been increasing. Five-year data collected by the Central Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA) show a sustained increase, averaging more than 10 percent for each of the last five years, in the number of applicants applying through the CASPA service. Although a portion of that increase can be attributed to growth in the number of programs participating in CASPA overall, individual programs have averaged a **22 percent** increase in their pools over the last year alone. In addition, CASPA applicants now apply to an average of five programs in order to increase their opportunities to enter our profession. These numbers are a strong indicator that interest in the profession is growing, an increasingly important consideration as we plan for future growth.

The data from CASPA and the PAEA Program Expansion Survey suggest that the current trend towards growth in the PA profession will continue. We are asking for your support and partnership as we address the challenge to identify and develop clinical training sites and preceptors. This represents not only a challenge for the education community, but an important one for the profession. It also offers each of you an opportunity to contribute through advocacy and leadership.

We ask that you take note of the following important opportunities:

- Attend PAEA educational sessions whenever possible to become acquainted with the role you can play personally as a clinical preceptor.
- Support your profession not only through leading by example, but in promoting the importance of precepting whenever you have the opportunity to address local, state, regional, and national audiences.
- Contact the PA programs in your geographic areas to learn how you can help.
- Visit the PAEA Web site at www.paeonline.org to view the latest data and learn more about the evolving PA educational process.

The PA profession is dependent on a dynamic, fluid, educational model, one that is responsive to a rapidly changing health care arena. More than ever before, today's PA students must develop lifelong learning skills so that they can continue to adapt to a competitive and changing practice environment. What will PA practice and programs look like 20 years into the future? No one knows for sure. However, one way to accurately predict

the future is to invent it. Through partnerships with our supporting organizations, PA educators at the programs and practicing, clinical PAs will have the ability to create the type of fluid educational model future medical training will require. It is our responsibility to embrace this challenge with passion and enthusiasm. By doing so, we can continue to provide and promote excellence in health care as we have over the past 40 years. I want to thank you today for your contribution to this important effort.

Sincerely,

Anita Duht Glicken

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