

CORE CULTURAL COMPETENCIES FOR PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDENTS

Knowledge

Knowledge includes an understanding of the definition of culture and its relationship to health, health disparities, disease incidence and prevalence for specific communities and or ethnic groups, historical factors that might shape the health behavior of a community, community folk practices and ethnopharmacology, and community social and historical context. Physician assistants should demonstrate the application of this knowledge of social phenomena to patient care. In addition, physician assistants are expected to demonstrate investigatory and analytic thinking approach to clinical situations.

Physician assistants are expected to:

- Understand the definitions of culture, race and ethnicity and their use in medical literature
- Recognize health disparities and factors that contribute to the existence of health disparities by race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and disability
- Identify community specific disease incidence and prevalence including health disparities
- Identify community practices including ethnopharmacology and folk practices
- Apply an understanding of the cultural social context to the patient encounter

Professional Attitude

Professional attitude is the demonstration or adherence to a set of positive values and ideals for the delivery of care. It includes prioritizing the interests of those being served above one's own. Physician assistants must know their professional and personal limitations. Physician assistants must demonstrate a high level of responsibility, ethical practice, sensitivity to a diverse patient population.

Physician assistants are expected to:

- Have an awareness of the socio-cultural factors that may affect individual patients
- Have examined the power dynamics of both society and medicine including but not limited to racism, sexism, and classism
- Recognize the power differential in the clinician-patient relationship
- Understand the operation and effect of stereotyping and bias in the interaction between patient and clinician
- Understand her/his personal cultural values and biases
- Recognize the role of self-reflection and self-critique for clinician improvement to quality care

Skills

Skills are the tools and abilities that enable the physician assistant to perform effectively. These skills enhance the quality of care provided by physician assistants to every patient regardless of setting or specialty

Physician assistants are expected to:

- Elicit the patient's explanatory model
- Assess the patient's spiritual values and practices
- Negotiate the treatment plan across cultural and social context
- Effectively utilize formally trained and informal interpreters
- Assess community, social, and historical context
- Identify community resources
- Use specific evidence based information
- Appraise, interpret, and critique the literature's use of race, ethnicity, and culture in application to the patient
- Utilize reflective practice techniques to improve quality of cross cultural encounters

REFERENCES

1. *Competencies for Physician Assistant Profession*. Available at: http://www.nccpa.net/PAC/Competencies_home.aspx. Accessed September 21, 2007.
2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Healthy People 2010*. 2nd ed. With Understanding and Improving Health and Objectives for Improving Health. 2 vols. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, November 2000. available at; http://www.healthypeople.gov/Document/html/uih/uih_bw/uih_2.htm#goals. Accessed September 21, 2007.
3. Association of American Medical Colleges. *Cultural Competence Education for Medical Students*. 2005. Available at: <http://www.aamc.org/meded/tacct/culturalcomped.pdf>. Accessed September 21, 2007.