

Physician assistants and internists reaffirm need for team-based primary care

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The American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) and the American College of Physicians (ACP) today released a policy monograph that supports the critical roles physician assistants (PAs) and physicians play in improving access to high-quality primary care. The paper, "Internists and Physician Assistants: Team-based Primary Care," results from a months-long collaborative project.

Many predict that the recent passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act will result in additional patients; at the same time, the number of [primary care](#) and other [health care professionals](#) is shrinking. New treatment paradigms are emerging and the collaborative effort strongly supports the patient-centered medical home, an interdisciplinary team-based model for care delivery that facilitates partnerships among individual patients, their personal physicians and other healthcare professionals, and when appropriate, the patient's family.

"Collaborative practice is fundamental to this model and is at the core of the PA profession," said AAPA President Stephen Hanson. "PAs working with physicians have a unique relationship and, as a team, play a critical role in improving access to high quality, cost-effective, patient-centered care. PAs practice with physician supervision and their training is modeled on physician education. These characteristics make it easy for them to be incorporated into multidisciplinary health care teams."

Last year, ACP published a policy monograph on the role of [nurse practitioners](#) (NPs) in primary care. It addressed the doctor of nursing degree and the role of NPs in the patient-centered medical home.

"ACP recognized the unique complementary care that physician assistants provide in primary care practices as part of a physician-directed team and

felt strongly that a paper focusing solely on physician assistants in primary care was also warranted," noted ACP President J. Fred Ralston, Jr., MD, FACP. "Much like the relationship that physician assistants and primary care physicians enjoy in health care delivery, this paper is a joint effort of the American Academy of Physician Assistants and the American College of Physicians."

AAPA and ACP support national and state legislation that allows full use of PAs in clinical teams and that promotes flexible team decision making at the practice level.

"This monograph highlights the commitments of both AAPA and ACP to enhancing the strong partnership between PAs and internists," said Dr. Ralston. "We will continue to work together to improve health care for patients and the practitioners who serve them."

More information: To view the policy monograph, please visit www.acponline.org/advocacy/whe.../internists_asst.pdf

Provided by American College of Physicians

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