

AAPA CME Content Development Suggestions

The physician assistant profession has defined a set of competencies that represent the areas of knowledge, skills and attitudes that physician assistants are expected to acquire and maintain throughout their careers. AAPA is dedicated to providing educational experiences, such as the Annual PA Conference, for PAs to acquire and demonstrate these competencies. Professional competencies for physician assistants include the effective and appropriate application of medical knowledge, interpersonal and communication skills, patient care, professionalism, practice-based learning and improvement, and systems-based practice, for the benefit of patients and the larger community being served. We encourage all speakers to use these competencies as a guide, when appropriate, to develop their presentations.

Competencies for the Physician Assistant Profession

Medical Knowledge is an understanding of the epidemiology, pathophysiology, diagnosis, management, and prevention of disease. Some questions regarding medical knowledge include:

- What is the latest literature on this topic?
- What clinical guidelines or evidence-based recommendations exist on this topic?
- What innovations or advances are anticipated in the near future?
- How might this condition impact diverse patients differently?

Interpersonal and Communication Skills are important to effective information exchange with patients, patient family members, members of the healthcare team, and the healthcare system. Some questions involving interpersonal and communication skills include:

- What are common reasons patients might not follow the recommended management? What techniques or tools can improve patient adherence?
- What essential information must be communicated and coordinated among members of the healthcare team?
- What patient cultural characteristics impact communication between the patient, family members or caregivers, and the healthcare team?

Patient Care is the ability to provide healthcare that is compassionate, appropriate, and effective for the treatment of health problems and the promotion of health across the life span. Some questions regarding patient care include:

- Are there disparities in patient health or care outcomes related to this topic based on health literacy, race or other cultural modifiers? What methods or strategies are effective in addressing disparities in individual patients and /or patient populations?
- How can care be provided with understanding and appreciation for the diverse needs and expectations of individual patients?
- What is the role for both primary care and specialty clinicians in the care of patients with this condition?

Professionalism is a commitment to personal development, individual accountability, ethical practice, sensitivity to a diverse patient population and adherence to legal and regulatory requirements in healthcare. Some questions about professionalism include:

- What particular legal and regulatory issues relate to this healthcare service or setting?
- What is the current and future role of the PA in this healthcare setting?
- What societal concerns or patient advocacy concerns arise with this issue?

Practice-Based Learning and Improvement is ongoing dedication to assess, evaluate and improve patient care practices. Some questions involving practice-based learning and improvement include:

- What are techniques and tools to measure, compare, and improve clinical care for this condition?
- What quality or performance measures are present or proposed relevant to this topic? How have individual clinicians, practices, and institutions met those goals?
- Where can PAs look for important information and updates on improving quality, providing culturally effective care, reducing health disparities, and ensuring patient safety in the particular patient care topic?

Systems-Based Practice encompasses the societal, organizational, and economic environments in which healthcare is delivered. Some questions regarding systems based practice include:

- How might information technology be used to improve access to care and enhance the quality of care delivered?
- How can patients be sure to receive the right care at the right time by providers who have the right tools and resources to deliver that care?
- What are organizational and health system strategies to achieve the best possible healthcare outcomes through reduction of medical errors and adherence to sound medical practice?

We hope this overview of the professional competencies for physician assistants will help you prepare for your participation in our annual conference. If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact:

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For specific assistance in incorporating diversity and/or health disparities information into your presentation, please contact:

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