

**SELECTED ANNOTATED
BIBLIOGRAPHY**

OF THE

**PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT
PROFESSION**

**FOURTH EDITION
1993**

American Academy of Physician Assistants

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PREFACE

The first three editions of the *Selected Annotated Bibliography of the Physician Assistant Profession* were produced by the Association of Physician Assistant Programs to meet the informational needs of the physician assistant profession, students, researchers and legislators.

This fourth edition of the bibliography, under the auspices of the American Academy of Physician Assistants with an educational grant from Merck Sharp & Dohme, has been expanded with entries published through the first months of 1993.

The published literature of the profession for the years 1984-93 was surveyed via computer searches on the MEDLINE, HEALTH ADMINISTRATION, BIOETHICS and ERIC databases and a search of other indices, abstracts and existing bibliographies. Selection of literature for inclusion in the bibliography emphasized empirical content rather than anecdotal literature.

Journal literature, books and government studies are included. A new chronological arrangement allows access to the latest literature at a glance.

Most importantly, literature selection was made to ensure accessibility of literature for the reader. The library in the national office maintains a copy of most of the literature cited. There is also information in the library which was not selected for inclusion but which may be useful for research.

Individuals have access to a broad array of information services from the National Network of Libraries of Medicine in the United States. By calling 800/338-7657, you will be connected to the medical library serving your area. Information is available about computer database searching, photocopy services and other information resources. Your regional medical library can also provide information about GRATEFUL MED software for IBM and Macintosh computers which allows you to search the MEDLARS databases to stay current with the clinical or administrative literature.

Susan M. Anderson, MLS
Editor

THE PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROFESSION

Physician assistants (PAs) practice medicine with supervision by licensed physicians, providing patients with services ranging from primary medicine to very specialized surgical care. A physician assistant's scope of practice is determined by state law, the supervising physician's delegation of responsibilities, the PA's education and experience, and the specialty and setting in which he or she works.

PAs are educated in accredited programs located at schools of medicine or allied health and teaching hospitals. Prerequisites for admission generally include two years of relevant college course work in addition to patient care experience. On average, PA programs are 102 weeks long (compared to 152 weeks of medical school).

The first phase of the program consists of intensive classroom and laboratory study, which provides students with an indepth understanding of the medical sciences. Subjects include anatomy, pharmacology, physiology, physical diagnosis, medical ethics and behavioral sciences. The second phase consists of clinical rotations with physician preceptors in a variety of settings, such as clinics, hospitals, long term care facilities and physicians' offices. Most programs require clinical rotations in internal medicine, family medicine, emergency medicine and geriatric medicine.

The National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants is an independent organization established to assure the competency of PAs. In conjunction with the National Board of Medical Examiners, it administers a certifying examination to graduates of accredited PA programs. Only those individuals who pass the exam may use the title "Physician Assistant-Certified" or "PA-C." In order to remain certified, PAs must complete 100 hours of continuing medical education every two years and take a recertification examination every six years. In large measure, this private voluntary certification process has been adopted as a state licensing requirement.

In the quarter century since the first PAs began practicing, the profession has shown remarkable growth. In 1993 there are over 23,000 clinically practicing PAs in the United States. They are located in almost all health care settings and in every medical and surgical specialty. Approximately 15 percent of all PAs practice in rural areas where they may be the only full-time provider of care (state laws stipulate the conditions for remote supervision by a physician). More than 20 percent of PAs work in urban and inner city areas.

The majority of PAs are in primary care; one quarter practice in surgical specialties. Over 75 percent of PAs practice in outpatient settings, with the remainder located in inpatient settings. According to the US Department of Health and Human Services' 1990 report to the President and Congress, "Physician assistants are more evenly distributed than any other primary care providers and can greatly improve access to health care in many areas."

PAs have proven themselves adaptable to the changes in medicine over the last quarter century and are filling roles that could not have been anticipated when the profession began. For example, many hospitals, faced with a shortage of medical residents or restrictions on resident work hours, have discovered the value of physician assistants.

Demand for physician assistant services continues to grow. Factors that have contributed to this growth include more uniformity among state laws, reimbursement by third party payers, and

increased recognition of the quality of care that PAs provide. The US Department of Labor predicts a 44 percent increase in the number of PA positions from 1990 to the year 2005. Nationally, the demand for PAs is estimated to exceed the supply of graduates by more than seven to one.

The American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) is the national professional society for PAs. The AAPA has chapters in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, the military services, the US Public Health Service and the Veterans Administration. Over two-thirds of all PAs are members of the AAPA. Major activities of the organization include government relations, research and data collection, publications, and continuing medical education.

The AAPA shares its national headquarters with the Association of Physician Assistant Programs (APAP). The Academy's members are individual physician assistants; the members of APAP are the more than 57 accredited physician assistant educational programs. The Association serves as a national information center on PA education.

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