



For immediate release

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***AAPA Endorses 2008 Public Health Service Guidelines
for Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence***

(Alexandria, VA) — The American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA), representing nearly 70,000 physician assistants (PAs) practicing in the U.S., is pleased to join other national organizations in endorsing the Public Health Service-sponsored guidelines on *Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence: 2008 Update*.

“The updated tobacco cessation guidelines provide even stronger evidence to support the efforts of physician assistants and other health care professionals in treating tobacco use and dependence,” said AAPA President Gregor F. Bennett, M.A., PA-C.

“AAPA encourages PAs in all specialties and all patient care settings to provide effective tobacco cessation interventions to patients,” Bennett added. “The new tobacco guidelines are appropriately focused on primary care in the ambulatory setting, but they also identify specific patient populations that would benefit from counseling and medication treatment in all specialties and all settings.”

AAPA recognizes that many patient care visits to health care providers occur outside of primary care practices in locations such as emergency departments, specialty clinics, ambulatory surgical centers, and hospitals. Tobacco users who receive most or all of their health care outside the primary care setting may benefit the most from tobacco cessation intervention.

Current research also indicates that tobacco cessation not only prevents serious disease, but aids in the treatment of patients already struggling with such conditions as cancer, HIV infection, diabetes, COPD, and psychiatric disorders. Tobacco cessation decreases healing time and the risk of infection after surgery. Treating pregnant women improves infant birth-weight and reduces the risk of pre-term birth and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

A Physician Assistant Foundation-funded task force on tobacco cessation in 2005 endorsed many of the same interventions recommended by the PHS-sponsored tobacco guidelines. The common goal is that every patient who uses tobacco is identified at every visit, advised to quit, and offered an evidenced-based treatment. The task force suggested that PAs using the “Ask-Advise-Refer” strategy can meet this goal in any patient care setting. The role of the patient’s care provider, a PA or other clinician, in advising the patient to quit is of foremost importance in increasing both the likelihood and success of a quit attempt.

Physician assistants are licensed health professionals who practice medicine as members of a team with their supervising physicians. PAs deliver a broad range of medical and surgical services to diverse populations in rural and urban settings. As part of their comprehensive responsibilities, PAs conduct physical exams, diagnose and treat illnesses, order and interpret tests, counsel on preventive health care, assist in surgery, and prescribe medications.

AAPA is the only national organization to represent physician assistants in all medical and surgical specialties. Founded in 1968, the Academy works to promote quality, cost-effective health care and the professional and personal growth of PAs. For more information about the Academy and the PA profession, visit AAPA’s Web site, www.aapa.org.

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