



February 6, 2015

Dr. Carolyn M. Clancy
Interim Undersecretary for Health
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Dr. Clancy:

On behalf of the more than 100,000 nationally certified physician assistants (PAs) represented by the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA), I would like to offer AAPA and its staff as a resource as you work to remedy the workforce shortages currently affecting the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). In light of the recently-released "OIG Determination of Veterans Health Administration's Occupational Staffing Shortages" report, which indicates that the PA profession experienced the third-largest shortage within VHA in 2014, AAPA stands ready to support you in increasing VHA's PA workforce. As such, we respectfully request a meeting with you in the coming weeks to discuss this matter.

PAs provide high quality, cost-effective medical care in virtually all health settings and in every medical and surgical setting. They are educated to seamlessly work in a healthcare team, and they manage the full scope of patient care, often handling patients with complex diagnoses or multiple comorbidities. At the same time, the PA profession has long been connected and committed to veterans and veterans' healthcare. The first PA students were Navy Corpsmen who served in the Vietnam War, and recruitment of and support for veterans in PA educational programs continues to this day. As of 2014, nearly 12% of PAs are veterans, active duty, or retired military in the National Guard and Reserves, and more than 2,000 PAs are currently employed by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Given all that PAs can offer to VHA, AAPA is concerned that PAs are one of the top professions experiencing shortages within the VA healthcare system. At the same time, we are pleased that the OIG report recognizes the importance of PAs as part of VHA's healthcare team. VHA's Action Plan concurs with OIG's overall findings and notes the establishment of a cross-disciplinary working group to address clinical staffing; however, we urge you to include PAs in these discussions so they may address some of the challenges which exist when it comes to recruiting PAs to practice at VHA. We believe that increased hiring of PAs would have an extremely positive effect on veterans'

healthcare, and we are hopeful that we will be able to form an ongoing, positive relationship with both the working group and with VHA as a whole.

AAPA would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss ways in which we may support your efforts to ensure veterans' timely access to quality medical care. Additionally, we would be interested in following up on some issues related to PAs at VHA which we addressed in a letter to Secretary McDonald dated August 11, 2014 (enclosed). Your staff may contact Sandy Harding, AAPA senior director, federal advocacy, at 571-319-4338 or sharding@aapa.org with any questions or to arrange a meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John McGinnity". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

John McGinnity, MS, PA-C, DFAAPA
AAPA President