

# Trends in State and National Professional Practice Compliance Among Physician Associates, 2018-2020

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## BACKGROUND

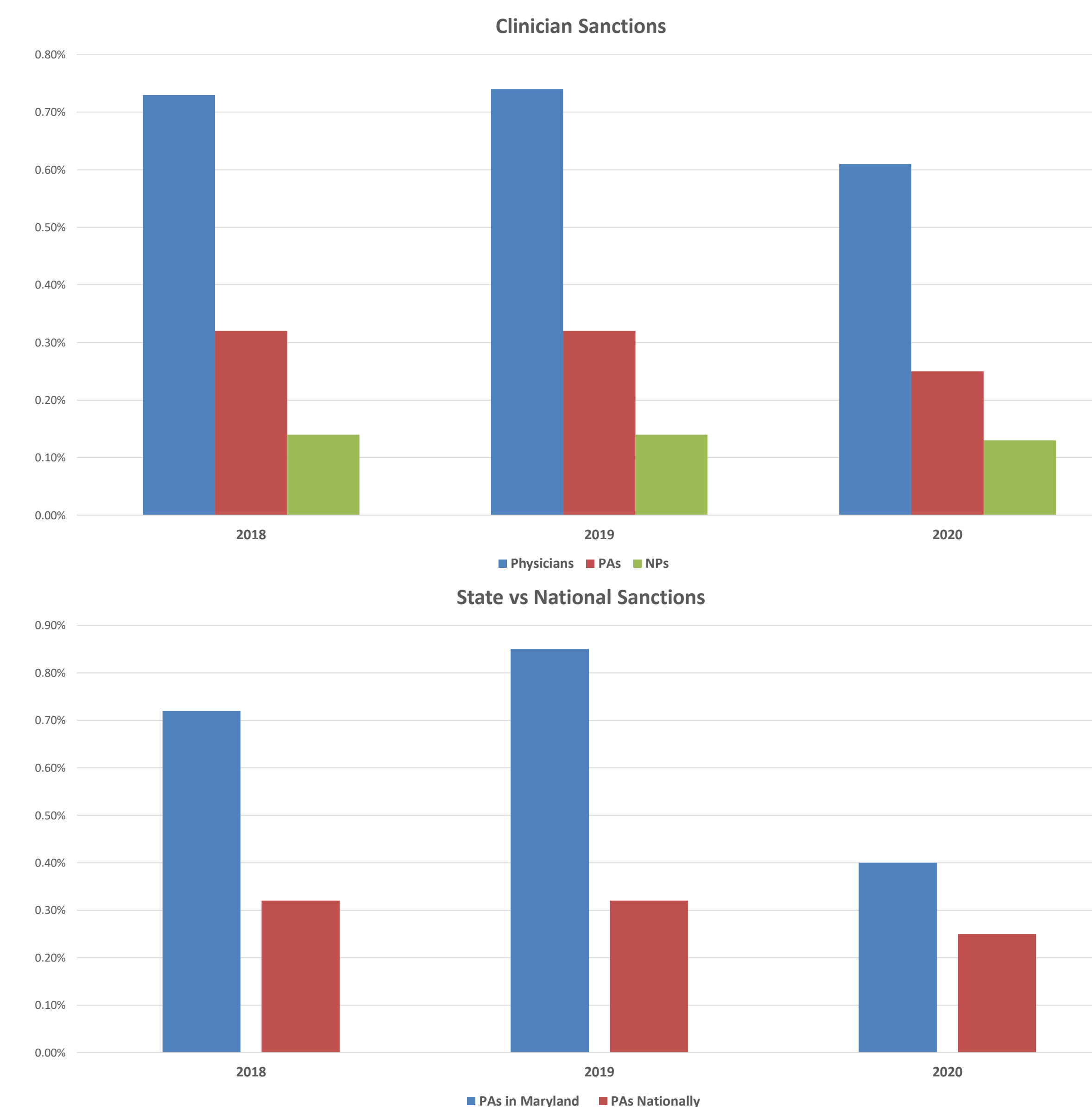
- Professional practice and compliance oversight by state medical disciplinary boards is a crucial component in ensuring patient safety and clinician competency. These state boards have a duty to enforce legal sanctions among clinicians with inappropriate professional behaviors.
- Norms and standards of PA professional behavior are set forth in the entry-level training of PA clinicians.
- The goal of this study is to identify trends and patterns of legal judgement sanctions, reveal areas of needed improvement in PA professional practice compliance, and suggest improved policy directions for PA educational programs as well as medical disciplinary bodies to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements

## Methodology

- We reviewed publicly available annual reports from the Maryland Board of Physicians (BOP) and compiled data on the number and types of disciplinary sanctions applied to practicing PAs and compared them with those of physicians. We classified individual sanctions for PAs to identify trends in the occurrence and patterns of these infractions. NP data was not accessible at the state level.
- To examine national patterns, we used the NPDB analysis tool to determine "adverse actions reports" for physicians, nurse practitioners (NP) and PAs. This data was compared to Maryland BOP data. Using the total number of practicing clinicians in Maryland, as well as corresponding information from the national NPDB, we were able to calculate the occurrence rate of disciplinary infractions for each clinician group annually.

## Results

- State data on PA sanctions closely reflects National Data in the NPDB.
- In the NPDB data, PAs are sanctioned about half as often as physicians but twice as often as NPs. Maryland PAs are sanctioned nearly twice as often as the national average for PAs.



- In our review of Maryland sanctions against PAs, the most common causes of citation were "administrative discrepancies" i.e, circumstances where PAs assumed an employer or hospital had completed their portion of the required licensing application when in fact it was either not done or done incorrectly.
- Other specific citations included inappropriate narcotic prescribing and/or documentation

## ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

- PAs have low numbers of sanctions from medical disciplinary bodies (0.3% of PAs per year nationally) with similarly low rates on the state level. It is unclear, however, why sanctions nationally are higher than NPs who practice in similar settings.
- These data suggest that education in PA programs on licensing, ethics, guidelines for opioid prescribing, and familiarity with state-specific guidelines and regulations should continue to be strengthened.
- This study revealed areas of needed improvement in PA professional practice compliance, and suggest room for improved policy directions for PA educational programs as well as medical disciplinary bodies to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements.

## REFERENCES

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