SAMPLE OP-ED

Celebrating PA Week

We all know that receiving medical care can be stressful. Whether you're nervous about a procedure, frustrated at the wait time for an appointment, or visiting a new medical practice for the first time, navigating the healthcare world can be understandably unnerving.

But PAs, or physician assistants, are here to help.

When you need healthcare, our goal is to be there for you. PAs are medical professionals who diagnose illness, develop and manage treatment plans, prescribe medications, and can serve as your primary healthcare provider. PAs improve healthcare access and quality, making it easier for you to get the care you need.

From October 6-12, we're celebrating PA Week, which recognizes our profession and its contributions to the nation's health. During PA Week, we hope you'll have the chance to talk to a PA about what it is we do, and why we're proud to do it.

Even if you haven't been treated by a PA before, there's a good chance you will in the near future. There are more than 123,000 PAs working across the country—and according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the profession is expected to grow 37 percent between 2016 and 2036.

Here in **[state]**, there are **[number]** PAs providing high quality care. There's a good chance there are PAs working in some of the medical offices you visit, and you may even know some students planning to pursue careers in the PA profession.

There are more than 250 PA programs, which educate students at the master's degree level. These programs are an average of 27 months long and require students to complete rigorous classroom coursework. Additionally, PA students complete 2,000 hours of clinical rotations in a broad spectrum of specialties, including family medicine, internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, general surgery, emergency medicine, and psychiatry. Trained as medical generalists, PAs perform many of the same tasks as physicians, and know how to treat the "whole patient."

PAs are well-positioned to treat our nation's most vulnerable populations, including those in rural and underserved communities. Here in **[state]**, we are in the midst of an unprecedented **[If appropriate]** physician shortage and a complex opioid crisis **[or other epidemic, if more appropriate]** – and PAs are on the front lines. Always innovative and always flexible, PAs are the solution to some of our system's biggest problems.

In every state, PAs, their state organizations, and the American Academy of PAs are working together with the legislature to modernize laws and regulations in an effort to remove unnecessary and antiquated barriers to care for patients. When red tape and paperwork make it difficult for PAs to practice, it's patients who suffer—and PAs always put their patients first.

The PA profession is committed to improving access to quality care for all patients, including you and your loved ones. The healthcare system can be complicated and at times, frustrating—but through it all, you can be confident that whatever you need, your PA can handle it.

[Author name] *is a PA currently practicing in* ***[city, state]****, and is also* ***[a member OR official title]*** *of* ***[constituent organization]****.*