

The Call for PAs to Take on the World's Smallest Patients; Why the World Needs PAs in Neonatology

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Background:

- The PA profession is answering the call for taking care of the country's aging population, but what about the needs of the youngest?
- As technology and understanding of prematurity has advanced, the need for capable providers in Neonatology continues to grow.
- The training for PAs elicit their abilities for a foundation in general medicine knowledge, but additional education/training, outside of current PA school practices, are needed for PAs to answer the call in Neonatology.

Description:

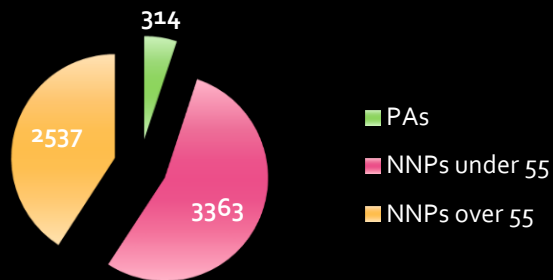
- The medicine and knowledge needed to take care of neonates by advanced practice providers (APPs) are vastly different to the needs of other populations.
- In the NICU, APPs are trained to perform delivery room resuscitations and to work with neonatologists to assess, diagnose, prescribe, perform procedures, and help develop care plans for neonates.
- NICU provider shortage from through NNP's retiring and lack of new NNP graduates.

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The majority of current practitioners in the NICU are NNPs; however, the need for additional personnel has led PAs to fill a need within this niche of medicine. Hospitals have recognized the ability of PAs to fulfill this need and have implemented fellowship programs to educate PAs in Neonatology.

National NICU APPs by Numbers



By the Numbers:

- On average, there are 266 new NNP grads per year
- Yearly, there are approximately 400 job openings in the NICU setting creating a practitioner void that NNP grads cannot fill

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Results:

- Current centers are developing a 12-month fellowship ranging from the well-newborn nursery to high-risk deliveries, to complex, critically ill infants in the NICU.
- Within the training, the PA learns how to examine a neonate, perform procedures, prescribe medications, and order nutritional supplementation not seen in other populations.
- Throughout the different units, the PA has direct hands-on experiences with different departments throughout the NICU stemming from bedside nursing, transport team, therapies, etc.
- The PA completes medical outlines based on the most common disease states and clinical techniques that encompass the care of the newborn.

Discussion:

- As the PA profession continues to evolve to fulfill the needs of the general public, the expanding field of Neonatology will start to look to the PA profession to fill a practitioner void.
- With the advent and completion of the 12-month fellowship, the PA 'fellow' is ready to start a career in the neonatal setting.
- The PA profession can prove as a valuable asset to the Neonatology community.