

4-Year Follow-up Study on Utilization of Physician Assistants at Academic Teaching Hospitals

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Background

This study is a 4-year follow-up to the original pilot study completed in 2015 regarding use of PAs at academic teaching hospitals. The original study documented the importance of PAs practicing in a split clinic model seeing patients autonomously and was shown to be effective by: increasing patient volume, increasing wRVU for the PA and decreasing wait time for patient visits. This 4-year follow-up was completed to show the long-term implications of allowing Physician Assistants to function at their highest scope of practice.

Results

The number of Advanced Practice Providers in our practice grew from 8 in 2010 up to 22 in 2019 (20 Physician Assistants and 2 Nurse Practitioners). In order to adjust for this increase, the total results of wRVUs and collections were averaged based on the number of APPs for each year. I then averaged the amount of wRVUs and collections per year for the 6 years prior to the original pilot study and the 4 years following the study. In comparing the 6 years (2010-15) prior to the pilot study versus the 4 years (2016-2019) following, there was a 125% increase in wRVUs per APP and a 100% increase in collections per APP.

Description

This study reviewed the change in collections and wRVUs for Physician Assistants in our department from the 6 years (2010-15) prior to the original pilot study compared to the 4 years (2016-19) following the pilot study. This method was chosen to determine the overall impact of the original pilot study completed in 2015 where PAs began to function in a split clinic model seeing patients on their own schedule.

Discussion

Physician Assistants are often being utilized as scribes rather than medical providers functioning at the highest scope of their practice. This is particularly true within academic teaching hospitals. Physician Assistants are well trained medical providers that are capable of providing quality medical care to their patients. Regardless of the medical setting, PAs should be utilized in such a way that increases access to care for patients. Physician Assistants are capable of improving overall efficiency and productivity in academic teaching hospitals when functioning at the highest scope of their practice.