

## **Physicians Seek Information about PAs**

The public relations and education committee (PR&E) of the PSPA undertook an endeavor to educate physicians in the Philadelphia area about the PA profession. Educating physicians about the PA concept not only increases the number of PA jobs but also creates important allies for our future possible legislative and healthcare efforts. Under the direction of PR&E chair Colleen Reynolds, the committee organized an evening CME presentation for physicians to come learn about the PA profession. They used a project outline developed by the AAPA known as “The Doctor’s Perspective: the Physician – Physician Assistant Team.” The presentation included a panel of both physicians and PAs, in primary care and specialty settings. The panelists shared their own first hand experiences and emphasized the benefit of the doctor/PA team approach to healthcare.

The program was held in King of Prussia on October 14, 2003 immediately preceding the PSPA annual conference. Fifty-seven physicians and office managers attended the evening! Additionally numerous physicians who could not attend the event requested that information about PAs be sent to their office. We received a total of 90 positive RSVPs, interested invitees, and requests for further PA information.

Information about PA education, reimbursement, scope of practice, and state regulations was presented. After the presentation the panel of four physicians and two PAs discussed their own experiences including patient acceptance, hospital privileges, malpractice insurance rates for PAs, and the difference between PAs and NPs. Questions from the audience included clarification of supervision requirements and PA credentialing with private payers as well as the incident to provisions of Medicare.

The physicians in attendance represented almost every area of medicine including family practice, internal medicine, ENT, nuclear medicine, surgery, orthopedics, ob/gyn, rehabilitation, dermatology, and emergency medicine. Of the participants surveyed, 77% reported that they had not worked with PAs in the past. All of those surveyed reported that they gained insight about PAs from the program. Two complaints about working with PAs were the inability of PAs to prescribe under a DO and the restrictive nature of the current PA regulations. Physicians reported that the evening dispelled misconceptions about PA billing, prescribing, a PAs ability to do H&P’s and hospital consults, requirements for on site supervision, and the fact that PAs do not compete with physicians.

Participants were asked how they felt that PAs compare with other non-physician health care providers. Answers ranged from “equal to others,” “scope of practice is their asset,” to “they are the non-physician provider of choice.” All of respondents said they saw the future of health care embracing the PA-Physician team as opposed to moving away from such an alliance. 100% of the survey participants said that after the evening, they would be more likely to work with a PA. This was demonstrated by the fact that at the end of the evening many of the physicians requested specific information about hiring a PA in the near future.

The take home message from the evening is that there are still many physicians unaware of the benefits that the physician – PA team offers. As physicians in Pennsylvania face a malpractice crisis and increased restrictions on resident work hours PAs can fill the much-needed healthcare void in Pennsylvania. There are still many more physicians and healthcare administrators who need

to be educated about the PA profession and its many benefits. The PSPA PR&E committee continues to strive for new and innovative ways to reach these physicians.