



## **Report of the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA) for the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA)**

*September 2023*

NCCPA Board Chair Beverly Black, MHSA, CAE, and I appreciate the opportunity to submit the following report of current and emerging initiatives on behalf of the NCCPA Board of Directors and staff. We also appreciate the strong efforts of the more than 2,000 faculty members, program directors, clinical preceptors, and staff members associated with ~303 PA programs, for your strong work in educating the next generation of PAs. Your efforts do not go unnoticed. Flexibility is a hallmark of the profession, and we at NCCPA applaud PA educators for their professional adaptability and creativity to continue to meet evolving student needs.

### **Certification and Maintenance of Certification**

---

#### **PANRE LA**

Following extensive analyses of many data sets and outcomes from the two-year Pilot Alternative to PANRE, in August 2021, the NCCPA Board of Directors approved a permanent longitudinal alternative to PANRE. **PANRE-LA**, launched in January 2023, with an enrollment of 45,339 of the 56,645 eligible PAs (76%). Owing to the up to 3-year longitudinal format of this assessment, enrollment in the inaugural administration of PANRE LA was inclusive of PAs due to sit for PANRE in 2024, 2025, and 2026. PAs have 12 quarters to complete 8 graded quarters of 25 questions per quarter. We are currently in quarter 3. Enrollee participation is active, and feedback continues to be very positive.

The application window for the 2027 cohort opened on July 5, to 22,789 eligible PAs. As with the inaugural cohort, enrolment has been robust. Also as with our initial cohort application window, we will continue to reach out to eligible PAs many times, sharing information and perspectives about the exam program before the application closes at the end of November. NCCPA's communications team has been proactive in sharing information about PANRE LA through all social media channels.

#### **Certification Maintenance**

Approximately 79,780 PAs are due to complete certification maintenance requirements by December 31, 2023. At mid-year 2023, certification maintenance completion rates for the 2021-2023 cycle are on track with prior year patterns.

#### **PANCE**

The growth in PANCE exams observed in the first quarter of 2023 continued into the second quarter. Consistent with increases in the number of PA program graduates, this quarter alone, 3,795 candidates sat for PANCE—an increase of 10.4% compared to the same period in 2022. The pass rate for first-time

test takers (~ 92.8%) is close to pre-pandemic levels. We expect these rates to continue to show improvement through the remaining months of 2023.

As shared in our August 2023 communique to PA Program Directors, our most significant focus on PANCE-related work involves planning for the new release of exams in **2025**, which will be built to reflect the revised blueprint. The updated PANCE blueprint is the result of the 2022 Practice Analysis. NCCPA will post the new blueprint before the end of 2023.

### **PA Involvement in NCCPA Exam Programs**

The Research and Exam Programs divisions continue to work diligently with volunteers on exam-related activities. NCCPA hosted 25 exam development meetings in the year's first half, bringing 223 unique PA subject matter experts to the NCCPA offices. Seventeen additional exam-related meetings are scheduled to take place between now and the end of the year. We continue in our deliberate approach to recruitment efforts to ensure a diverse balance of individuals participating in these critically important initiatives. We cannot emphasize enough how critical of a role our subject matter experts play in exam development activities. We extend our sincere thanks to all who work with us on these important endeavors.

### **NCCPA's CAQ Program**

Developed in response to requests from specialty PA organizations and external market pressures, since 2011, NCCPA offers Certificates of Added Qualifications (CAQs) in 9 specialties; 2 new ones are underway: Cardiovascular & Thoracic Surgery, Emergency Medicine, Hospital Medicine, Nephrology Orthopaedic Surgery, Pediatrics, and Psychiatry. New in 2023: Dermatology and Palliative Medicine/Hospice Care. Coming soon: OB/GYN (2024) and Occupational Medicine (2025). The CAQ program is voluntary and well-suited for PAs committed to a particular specialty.

### **Working with Stakeholders**

---

NCCPA continues its strong efforts to maintain communication and outreach to PAs and other stakeholder groups through presentations delivered in person, primarily and virtually, if requested. In addition to a presentation of PA workforce trends, our primary messages to PAs include certification updates as well as general information on NCCPA's function, duties, and processes. We continue to rely on electronic and social media outreach to highlight the strong work of individual PAs and PA teams and to share their stories. Through all communication methods including NCCPA's quarterly reports and monthly newsletters, the emphasis of NCCPA's outreach continues to be on the value of certification, NCCPA's career-long partnership with PAs, and data-driven and humanistic promotion of the profession.

This is a very important time for our profession and the healthcare industry, in general, and partnerships are essential. We were pleased to participate in PAEA's Doctoral Summit, and the annual Cross Org meetings and to meet with our sister PA organizations (CEOs meet ~ weekly and Elected leaders meet monthly/quarterly) via Teams to discuss topics of mutual interest. We were pleased to launch the Cross Org video last year with our sister PA organizations, highlighting the roles and responsibilities of each of

the national PA organizations (AAPA, ARC-PA, NCCPA, and PAEA) and some of the ways that each organization supports the profession and the patients that we serve.

NCCPA continues to relate with its many partners including the Professional Certification Coalition (PCC), the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS), the Federation of Regulatory Bodies (FARB), the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE), the Institute of Credentialing Excellence (ICE), the Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation (CLEAR) and the Association of Test Publishers (APT) to name a few. The emphasis of these partnerships and communications continues to be on the value of PAs, updates, and innovations in NCCPA certification programs, and many other topics of mutual interest. The Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) continues to promote NCCPA data on the profession through linkage of NCCPA statistical reports and other publications in the FSMB newsletter. NCCPA has remained engaged with AAPA, the Council of State Governors, and the FSMB, in the work to explore the development of the PA Licensure Compact.

Additional highlights of NCCPA's recent outreach and communication efforts include:

- The NCCPA newsletter, websites, and social media have all increased in impressions and number of overall users,
- NCCPA was pleased to participate in the AAPA conference in Nashville, where we were a Challenge Bowl sponsor, exhibitor, and presenter during their main and pre-PA events.
- We continue to make progress in our DEI initiatives including follow-up to NCCPA's 2022 in-person REPRESENT Summit, with NCCPA hosting quarterly virtual events. The last virtual event was in June with 41 attendees. Plans are underway for REPRESENT Summit 2024, NCCPA's profession-wide convening on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the PA profession.
- NCCPA is pleased to participate in pre-PA awareness events at HBCUs
- NCCPA exhibited at the American School Counselors Association (ASCA) in Atlanta, GA and brought Back2School\*<sup>1</sup> information about the PA profession for >5000 attendees.

## **Research, Data and Outreach**

---

NCCPA reports information from the PA Professional Profile, with aggregate data provided by more than 90% of Certified PAs. Staff and leadership are invited to deliver dozens of presentations on PA workforce data at state PA and specialty meetings each year. Highlights of the presentations are promoted on NCCPA social media channels and NCCPA News. Please encourage your faculty and students to read the NCCPA News, sent to all PAs and PA students at the end of each month. We welcome your feedback!

PA educators and researchers are reminded that NCCPA continues to field data requests in support of quality research endeavors. The procedures for such data requests are posed on the NCCPA website at <https://www.nccpa.net/resources/nccpa-research/>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Back2School <https://www.nccpa.net/back2schoolprogram/>. Introducing the PA Profession to all ages

NCCPA staff are pleased to provide in-person or virtual sessions for PA students on PANCE “What to expect on exam day”. Please visit <https://www.nccpa.net/pa-program-resources/> or NCCPA’s communication team at +1 678.417.8100 Email: [pr@nccpa.net](mailto:pr@nccpa.net) for more information.

### **PAEA Partnership**

---

NCCPA’s more than ten-year partnership with PAEA for exam development and delivery services (End of Rotation, PACKRAT, and End of Curriculum Exams™) concluded in August. This partnership has been in effect since the inception of the PAEA’s EOR program. NCCPA and PAEA have worked toward a smooth transition of services. The collaboration between our organizations on this vitally important endeavor has been a growth and learning experience and a true labor of love and commitment to the PA profession, for both organizations. We thank PAEA for the opportunity to be involved in important work and are pleased with the progress that our organizations have made in this area. We wish PAEA much-continued success with its new vendors.

### **PAEA Nominee to NCCPA Board of Directors**

---

A special thanks is extended to Pat Kenney-Moore, Ed. D, PA-C, who is in her second term as PAEA’s nominee to the NCCPA Board of Directors. Pat is a valued member of the Board and an active member of several workgroups and committees. We appreciate her contribution and thank her for her strong work this year!

On an operations note, we are pleased to share that NCCPA was named one of Modern Healthcare’s “2023 Best Places to Work” for the fifth year in a row and one of 175 Top Ranked Workplaces in 2023 by the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

Again, Beverly and I thank you for the opportunity to submit this report and to share brief remarks via video, during the virtual business meeting next month. We welcome your thoughts and questions.

Best Regards,



Dawn Morton-Rias, Ed. D, PA-C, ICE-CCP, FACHE

President/CEO

[dmorton-rias@nccpa.net](mailto:dmorton-rias@nccpa.net)

---

*The National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA) is the only certifying organization for physician assistants (PAs) in the United States. The PA-C credential is awarded by NCCPA to PAs who graduate from accredited PA education programs and then fulfill certification, certification maintenance, and recertification requirements. Today there are more than 168,318 Board-certified PAs.*

---

---

**National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants**

12000 Findley Rd., Ste. 100, Johns Creek, GA 30097 ● Tel: 678.417.8100 ● Fax: 678.417.8135 ● [www.nccpa.net](http://www.nccpa.net)