

 Mike Delmonico Consulting, LLC ®

*Healthcare and Medical Practice Success Essentials*®

# Insights Into the Future of the Physician Assistant (PA) Profession

 2558 West Main Rd, Portsmouth, Rhode Island 02871   
401.239.6100 [www.mikedelmonicoconsulting.com](http://www.mikedelmonicoconsulting.com)

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## The Projected Shortage of Physicians

- A projected shortage of physicians in the United States (between 37,800 and 124,000) is expected by 2034.
- Population growth and the aging of baby boomers will drive increasing demand for healthcare services.
- Physician Assistants (PAs) and Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) are expected to help offset the physician shortage.

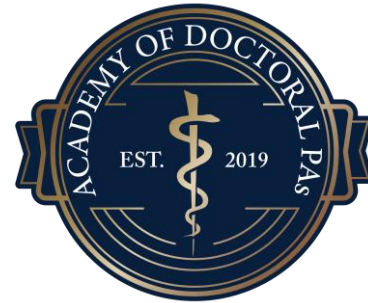
## The Projected Demand for Physician Assistants

- ❑ The employment of PAs is expected to grow by 31% from 2020 to 2030.
- ❑ PAs will remain in high demand based on their current characteristics as well-trained and cost-effective professionals with diverse skill sets and of whom there is a ready supply.
- ❑ Although demand for PAs will increase, the growth in demand for APRNs will increase at a faster pace.

## Optimal Team Practice Model

- ❑ The Optimal Team Practice Model (OTP), proposed by the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA), has emerged as a major focus in nation-wide discussions about the future of the PA profession.
- ❑ OTP has not proposed an independent practice model but rather access to physicians and other qualified medical professionals for collaboration, consultation, and referral, as indicated by the patient's condition and the standard of care, and in accordance with the PA's education, training, and experience.
- ❑ The 4 components of the OTP Model are:
  - A team-based practice
  - Elimination of PA supervisory agreement requirements
  - Creation of autonomous state PA boards
  - PA eligibility for direct reimbursement by payers

A Few Stakeholders Impacting the PA Marketplace



## Key Viewpoints for the Future of the PA Profession

- ❑ Some PA organizations (AAPA, PAEA, ADPA) are advocating for changes such as (1) expanded scope of practice, (2) clinical autonomy, (3) professional self-regulation, (4) direct reimbursement by payers, (5) a professional title change, and (6) a doctorate as the terminal degree.
  - On May 24, 2021, the AAPA House of Delegates passed a resolution affirming “physician associate” as the official new title of the PA profession BUT there is a long road ahead before such a title change is acknowledged by other professional organizations and regulatory bodies.
- ❑ The American Medical Association (AMA) does not support significant changes to the PA profession.
- ❑ The Federal government continues to finance PA education and training programs in support of the profession’s growth.

## Are Changes to the PA Profession Necessary?

- ❑ Among the key stakeholders, there remain differing opinions as to the extent of changes that will be in the best interest of the PA profession and the healthcare industry.
  - Does the healthcare industry need changes to the PA profession in order to address unmet care needs and the looming shortage of physicians?
  - Will changes to the PA profession lead to consumer confusion OR lead to greater awareness, appreciation, and utilization of the profession?
  - Is the vision of proposed changes to the PA profession shared by working PAs and the various PA organizations OR do different viewpoints exist between these groups?
  - Are proposed changes to the PA profession necessary for it to remain as attractive a career destination as is true today?

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