

Matt Boutte - Platform Statement

Physician Assistants in emergency medicine are beginning to come into a new era. While the idea of formalized post-graduate training has been around as long as our profession, it has gained significant footing in the past several years with the number of programs increasing exponentially. One hears the same phrase at every PA conference- "We're thinking of starting our own ER residency". This shift in thinking has acknowledged the unique subset of skills required to function in today's emergency departments. The increasing number of new PA's who do not have significant prior healthcare experience, together with our physician colleagues who also advocate for more formalized training has also helped propel this movement.

The new training paradigm has taken on many faces in the past several years. We see physician groups and hospitals who utilize a six-month "apprenticeship" program for new graduates, to classes that focus on teaching the unique procedures needed in emergency medicine practitioners with the goal of credentialing in those procedures; all the way to structured 12 or 18 month residency programs at various institutions around the country- one of which even offers a clinical doctorate in emergency medicine. The first PA's to take the NCCPA's specialty certificates of added qualifications exams has already occurred, again owing to this shift towards more formal training.

SEMPA has rightly aligned itself with the American College of Emergency Physicians in order to help better represent the interests of emergency medicine PA's while having a voice in both our role in the ER along with what our training should look like. I believe that I have the unique skills and experience to help SEMPA by becoming a director-at-large.

While I have been an emergency medicine PA for only two and a half years, I have been involved in emergency medicine as a whole for over ten years. Volunteering as an EMT in college and working as one on the ambulance for a fire department prior to beginning PA school helped build an interest to one day working in the ER. During PA school I took a step further by becoming the student director-at-large with SEMPA, at a time when the idea of specialty exams for PA's was in the very beginning phases of discussion. My time with SEMPA also resulted in my helping to develop and publish a student's guide on the website to the ins and outs of the ER during that particular rotation. Immediately after graduating PA school I began an 18-month post-graduate program in emergency medicine at Albert Einstein Medical Center, which was firmly enmeshed with the physician residency that has been in place for over 20 years. Myself and two other graduates were the first to complete the entire program, gaining valuable experience and skills at a level-1 trauma center that help me every day in my career.

I believe that the training of PA's in emergency medicine needs to be more formalized, however I don't think we yet know exactly how that needs to be implemented. ER blocks at PA programs across the country have too wide a range of instruction and hands-on learning. Whether we should tighten standards at PA programs, or help foster new and existing post-graduate programs, or support procedure-oriented classes that lead to credentialing, I believe I can offer the proper perspective to help steer us in the right direction while preserving the lateral mobilization that makes our profession unique. We must stay relevant in a specialty that will only continue to evolve.