



SEMPA Statement on PA Name Change Criticism June 11, 2021

Recently, the American Academy of PAs (AAPA) House of Delegates passed a resolution by a majority vote of 198 to 68 affirming “physician associate” as the official title for the PA profession. The vote took place after an exhaustive two-year process that included research and input from a national title investigation firm as well as the voice of a number of key stakeholders. The Society of Emergency Medicine Physician Assistants (SEMPA) was represented as a delegate during this important vote.

The idea of changing the “physician assistant” name is far from new. In fact, it has been discussed and debated within the community for the past 20 years, if not more. Additionally, the term “physician associate” has been used as an official title for PAs since the beginning of the PA profession. That, however, has not stopped physician groups across all specialties from pouncing on the unfounded notion that the name change is a calculated move by PAs to encroach upon their profession. This is particularly troublesome and disappointing when it comes to the specialty of emergency medicine.

On every level, emergency medicine has successfully operated with a team-based approach. From the staff in the emergency department to the physician/PA model of serving patients to the national physician/PA organizations working together toward the same goals, it has always been based on working as a team. That is why hours prior to a scheduled meeting with SEMPA to discuss the name change, it was so surprising that the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) and the Emergency Medicine Residents’ Association (EMRA) released a joint statement in which they opposed the title change without having any understanding, context or history of the Associate title.

Even more disappointing was the post on the *ACEP Lately* blog that followed days after what was a seemingly positive and collegial meeting. In the blog, ACEP further emphasized their opposition to the name change while delineating plans for a public relations campaign to instruct the public to ask to “see a doctor”. Despite claims that this campaign will not be negative or disparaging, we at SEMPA worry that such a campaign will divide the physician and PA professions and tear at the fabric of what has made the team-based approach within emergency medicine so successful.

SEMPA will continue to keep its focus squarely on supporting emergency medicine PAs and the patients they serve. PAs are important members of the emergency medicine workforce, and we will not allow the fears and anxieties of outside organizations to distract us from this focus.

SEMPA understands that our profession will continue to grow and evolve, and we will maintain our commitment to team-based practice through that evolution. We thank our members for their patience as we work through many of these emergency medicine workforce issues.