Roundtable: NCCPA Certification / Re-Certification Update

Greg Thomas, PA-C
Update from NCCPA:  
It's Not Just About PANRE

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Presentation Outline

- About NCCPA
- The Certification Maintenance Process
  - Focus on Recent Changes to CME Requirements
- The Latest on PANRE
- Emergency Medicine Certificate of Added Qualifications (CAQ) Program
- NCCPA Celebrates the PA Profession

Brief Overview of NCCPA
Our Purpose

To provide certification programs that reflect standards for clinical knowledge, clinical reasoning and other medical skills and professional behaviors required upon entry into practice and throughout the careers of physician assistants.

Our Mission is More than Creating Exams

NCCPA is committed to helping you maximize the safe, productive, and competent practice of medicine by certified PAs.

About NCCPA

- Only national certifying body for PAs
- Certifying PAs since 1975
- Passionate about PAs and the patients you serve
  - Rely on PA practice data to inform our certification programs
  - Publish statistical reports to inform employers, policy makers, the media, patients and others
  - Promote qualifications and roles of certified PAs to various audiences (physicians, employers, state medical boards, public, etc.)
  - Engage in significant communications/PR efforts on your behalf: [www.PAsDoThat.net](http://www.PAsDoThat.net)
2017 Board of Directors: Composition

11 PAs, 4 physicians and 1 public member

PA Members
• 6 PA Directors-at-Large
• 1 nominee from AAPA
• 1 nominee from PAEA
• 1 nominee from FSMB
• Immediate past chair
• President/CEO

Physician & Public Members
• 1 nominee from AMA
• 1 nominee from ADA
• 1 nominee from ACP
• 1 nominee from AAP
• 1 public member

But that’s only part of the story...

PA Involvement with NCCPA Adds Up

• 51 PA item writers serve on item writing committees, writing questions that appear on PANCE, PANRE and the CAQ exams
• 59 PAs spent three days with us working to identify content that represents core medical knowledge
• 15 PAs serve on promotion and publicity councils, supporting our efforts to generate story ideas and press coverage for the profession
• In 2016, NCCPA hosted 48 PA team meetings to develop and validate exam questions, set passing standards

PA Involvement With NCCPA

• 72 PAs served on 2015 Practice Analysis workgroups, helping identify the knowledge, skills and abilities that were included on that survey
• Approximately 16,000 PAs responded to the Practice Analysis survey
• Over 100,000 PAs have completed the PA Professional Profile
• In 2016, 55 PAs participated in a 3-day focus group to talk about PANRE
• More than 30,000 participated in nationwide survey of all certified PAs about proposed new PANRE model
Certification Maintenance Process

100 CME credits every two years
- 50 Category 1 credits
- Self-assessment CME and PI-CME are now optional
- PANRE every 10 years

NCCPA Heard You!!
- NCCPA heard the concerns from PAs about the burdens of the certification maintenance process
- Conducted an in-depth review of existing SA/PI activities with particular emphasis on the gaps in availability of practice-relevant options for so many PAs
- Found inadequate coverage of self-assessment in 31 specialty areas and of PI-CME in 13 specialty areas.
- That means we ran the risk of PAs pursuing CME activities with little or no relevance for them just to meet this NCCPA requirement – never what we intended.

Reasons for the Recent Changes

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- That means we ran the risk of PAs pursuing CME activities with little or no relevance for them just to meet this NCCPA requirement – never what we intended.
Based on those findings, the NCCPA Board voted to make changes:

- SA and PI-CME are no longer required – now optional
- We remain committed to the concept that SA and PI activities are highly valuable forms of CME
- NCCPA will award additional credit – weighting SA and PI-CME more heavily than regular Category 1 CME

Our Response

The Specifics

- All approved self-assessment CME activities will be awarded 50% bonus credits by NCCPA
- In each 2-year CME cycle, the first 20 PI-CME credits logged will be doubled
- The weighting is applied by NCCPA
- Weighting will apply to all PAs – whether on the 6-year cycle or the 10-year cycle

Finding Self-Assessment and PI-CME

- Lists of approved self-assessment and PI-CME activities now available on our website.
  - Organized by specialty with details on the number of credits offered and cost.
- To access that list: http://www.nccpa.net/finding-sa-and-pi-cme
- Navigate there through the “Maintain Certification” link at the top of our home page
It is critical to our mission to provide a certification/recertification program that is:
- Meaningful and relevant; and
- Provides assurance for patients, employers, state licensing boards, and others regarding PAs’ knowledge and skills.

To do this, we must continuously monitor and evolve the certification process because things change:
- Advances in technology
- Rapid changes in medicine
- Changes in the PA profession
Our Underpinning Principles

1. The first concern must be the public's interest as we work to determine how we most effectively can deliver a recertification exam process that supports delivery of high quality, affordable, accessible health care.

2. To support the flexibility PAs have to change specialties during their career span and to work in multiple specialties concurrently, it is important to maintain the generalist nature of the PA-C credential.

Other Beliefs that Have Driven this Process

- While ultimately NCCPA’s responsibility, we make better decisions about changes to PANRE with the benefit of input from PAs and other stakeholders.
- While individuals often view issues from their personal perspective, organizations are able to view issues from a more global perspective.
- We must continually re-examine the content and format of our exams while recognizing that change takes several years.
- Health care providers should be held to high standards for maintaining current knowledge and skills.

NCCPA Set Out to Obtain Data and Feedback

- To make the best, most informed decision, NCCPA:
  - Conducted research
  - Held focus groups
  - Elicited feedback from several key stakeholder groups
Key Messages from the Public Comment Period

- PAs are very concerned about maintaining their ability to change specialties and do not want to see that threatened.
- PAs are very concerned about the cost and time required to maintain certification (CME and exam requirements).
- If they must take an exam, PAs would prefer one that is more relevant to their practice than today's PANRE.
- Exams matter to the public and to state medical boards.

Public survey developed with the Citizens Advocacy Center:

- 97% Key "YES" Should all PAs be tested on general medical knowledge?
- 7% No additional requirements
- 18% Core & Exam
- 72% Core & Exam & CME
- 4% Other & Exam

The Results of the PANRE Exploration

- No further changes to PANRE and the recertification process
- PANRE content will shift from "General Knowledge" to "Core Knowledge," gradually but steadily over the next several years.
...the essential, foundational knowledge and cognitive skills required for PAs to provide safe and effective care for patients across the lifespan and across the spectrum of medicine, regardless of the specialty or area of practice.

PAs Involved in Every Stage of the Process

- Before the test is administered
  - PAs participate in the practice analysis to help establish what goes on the exam (every 5-7 years)
  - PAs write the exam questions (items)
  - Once exam forms are constructed, PAs review them for fairness and quality
- After the test is administered
  - PAs participate in an activity called key validation
  - Questionable items are flagged using statistics and then reviewed for currency, appropriateness, & quality
  - PAs set the performance standard or the amount of knowledge one has to know to pass the exam (every 3-5 years)

PA Involvement in Exam Development Process

- PA Roles
  - Exam Blueprint
  - Items Development
  - Exam Development
  - Exam Review
  - Practice Analysis
  - Standard Setting
  - Key Validation
  - Statistical Analysis
  - Exam Administration
  - Exam Blueprint
Certification is a Community Process

- Volunteering can be as short as an ad hoc meeting (2-3 days) to as often as an item writing committee (on-going, multiple meetings yearly)
- If you're interested in volunteering, please email volunteer@nccpa.net

Getting Ready to take PANRE?

Review the Exam Blueprint
Familiarize yourself with the types of questions you'll see on the exam with NCCPA Practice Exams.

- 120 questions taken from NCCPA test question banks
- Can pause and complete exam at later time
- $50

Emergency Medicine CAQ Program
**Key Principles of the Specialty CAQ Program**

- NCCPA (and many stakeholders) agree that the PA-C must maintain its position as the primary credential for all PAs.
- NCCPA has remained committed to developing a voluntary specialty program.
  - A CAQ is not required to maintain NCCPA certification, and we require licensure as a condition of earning a CAQ so that table can't be turned.
- The program has been developed to be as inclusive as possible, recognizing the individual differences among and within specialties.

**Specialty CAQ Process**

- **Prerequisite:**
  - License
  - PA-C

- CME: Experience, Cases, and/or Procedures

- After completing requirements above:
  - Pass Specialty Exam

- Maintenance Process (6 yr CAQ cycle):
  - 125 credits specialty CME
  - Specialty exam

- 6 years to finish

**CME Requirements**

- In the 6 years leading up to applying for the CAQ exam, earn 150 Category 1 CME credits focused on emergency medicine practice including:
  - 50 earned within the two years prior to date of exam application
  - ACLS
  - You decide whether a topic is related to practice. May be subject to audit.
  - The same 150 credits may also be used for maintenance of the PA-C credential.

Visit www.nccpa.net/Emergencymedicine for recommendations on CME activities.
Experience Requirement

- 3,000 hours of experience (the equivalent of 18 months of full-time practice) working as PA in emergency medicine within six years of attesting to NCCPA that you’ve met this requirement

- No documentation required unless you’re selected for an audit

Procedures / Skills Requirements

- You must provide attestation from a supervising physician who works in the specialty and is familiar with your practice and experience. The physician attestation must indicate that you have performed the procedures and patient management relevant to the practice setting and/or understand how and when the procedures should be performed.

- You may not have experience with each procedure, but must be knowledgeable of the basics of the procedures, in what situation the procedures should be done, and the associated management of patients.

List of procedures that should be considered are provided at www.nccpa.net/Emergencymedicine.

Emergency Medicine CAQ Exam

- Content blueprints developed using data from practice analysis
  - Identifies set of knowledge, skills and abilities used by PAs in the specialty
  - Available online

- Test committees include PAs and MDs working in the specialty

- Other resources available online
  - Disease and disorder lists
  - Sample test items
  - Practice exam

To view the content blueprints, disease and disorder list, sample items and practice exam, visit www.nccpa.net/Emergencymedicine.
Emergency Medicine CAQ Exam

- 120 questions
- Targeted to certified PAs working in the specialty
- All questions available for scoring if they meet our performance standards
- 2-hour exam – no breaks
- Testing windows for remainder of 2017:
  - April 10-11 immediately following this conference
  - September 18-19

NCCPA Celebrates the PA Profession

Telling the World about Certified PAs

- Ongoing effort to publish articles and garner positive media attention for Certified PAs
- Online hub: www.PAsDoThat.net

Making a Difference
#PAsDoThat

NCCPA is in hospital medicine impact: Few, rare is high demand

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Connecting with Employers

- Search hundreds of jobs for Certified PAs
- Upload your résumé
- Set up alerts for new jobs

Click "Career Center" Link at www.nccpa.net

PA-C Emeritus

- New recognition for PAs retiring from clinical practice
- Eligibility requirements:
  - At least 60 years old or unable to practice due to permanent disability
  - Retired from clinical practice
  - Have been NCCPA-certified at least 20 cumulative years during the PA career
  - No reportable actions in NCCPA disciplinary history
- Proceeds from the one-time $50 application fee will benefit the PA Foundation to expand the NCCPA Endowed Scholarship awarded to PA students

PA Health Foundation

- Mission: to advance the role of certified PAs in improving health.
- Launched initiatives in health equity, oral health and mental health, including videos and educational tools
Grants are available for PAs making a difference in their community.
- 22 grants issued last year.
- For more information, visit [www.nccpa.net/foundationpage](http://www.nccpa.net/foundationpage).

The PA History Society shares the history of the development of the PA profession and illustrates how PAs continue to make a difference in our society.

[www.pahx.org](http://www.pahx.org)
Help Spread the Word!

- Share articles on social media with #PAsDoThat
- Share and retweet ours and others’ posts with #PAsDoThat
- Use tools available in the Resources section of the NCCPA website
  - Presentations
  - Press releases
  - Flyers
  - Videos
  - Articles

For More Information from NCCPA

- Read NCCPA News, our monthly e-newsletter
- Visit www.nccpa.net
- Follow us on social media

Thank you!

Contact: gregt@nccpa.net

www.nccpa.net
www.PAsDoThat.net