



The Value of Certification

NCCPA is strongly dedicated to its purpose of providing certification programs that reflect standards for clinical knowledge, clinical reasoning, and other medical skills and professionals required upon entry to practice and throughout a PA's career. Workforce data suggest that certified PAs are essential members of the health care delivery team that help to provide affordable, high-quality health care to millions of patients. It is important that NCCPA certification programs provide value to the stakeholders who rely on that certification.

In an effort to help determine how stakeholders perceive NCCPA certification and what aspects are important to the wide range of stakeholders, we have conducted a series of research studies with various stakeholder groups. Recent efforts have focused on the public (patients) and certified PAs. The analyses of the data have resulted in several presentations and the development of manuscripts that are in various stages of publication. Greater detail on the studies, including exact research methodology and in-depth findings, are included in those manuscripts; however, we wanted to provide information on some of the overall descriptive findings from those recent research efforts.

PA Perspectives on Value of Certification

NCCPA surveyed PAs to learn more about their perspectives regarding NCCPA certification. Over 18,000 PAs participated in the Pilot Alternative to PANRE, and this group was representative of the entire population that was due to recertify in 2018 and 2019. As part of the Pilot process, PAs were asked to complete surveys after the completion of each quarter's questions. On the survey administered after the seventh quarter of the Pilot, PAs were asked to rate their level of agreement with various statements related to the value of NCCPA certification. The survey had a 60.4% response rate, and PAs indicated a rating of agreeing or strongly agreeing in regard to NCCPA certification as noted below:

- Helps with fulfilling licensure requirements – 88%
- Helps update medical knowledge – 86%
- Provides objective evidence of my continued level of competence 81%
- Contributes to the acceptance/respect others have of the PA profession 75%
- Provides personal satisfaction – 70%
- Helps me monitor or improve the quality of my patient care – 70%
- Helps with the credentialing process at my hospital or institution – 69%
- Helps me to advance professionally – 58%
- Helps me to better compete with other providers such as NPs for clinical positions – 52%

Only 18% of PAs agreed/strongly agreed that NCCPA certificate provided no value to them, and 74% disagreed/strongly disagreed with this statement. A more in-depth analysis of differences by PA demographics and practice characteristics on whether NCCPA certification helps to update medical



knowledge was presented during the 2020 PAEA Educational Forum. A manuscript with all results, including bivariate and multivariate analyses, will be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal in June.

Public Perspectives on Value of Certification

In 2016 and 2018, NCCPA conducted studies to help gather information on the public's knowledge and attitudes regarding PA certification. For this study, NCCPA administered the survey to a nationally representative sample of U.S. adults from a panel with over 90 million potential respondents maintained through a leading survey institution. Highlights of the most recent 2018 results are as follows:

- 90% of survey respondents indicated that medical certification was an important factor in selecting a healthcare provider, second only to medical license (92%).
- 92% of respondents felt PAs should continually learn about new medical information.
- 82% of respondents felt PAs should be assessed regularly on their medical knowledge.
- 76% of respondents correctly indicated that PAs must pass a national certifying exam as one requirement for obtaining an initial license to practice medicine.
- 82% of survey respondents reported positive experiences with PAs

Findings from the 2018 Public Perspectives on Value of Certification have been presented in the AAPA, Federation of State Medical Boards, and Academy Health conferences in 2020. One manuscript entitled: "Public Knowledge and Beliefs Regarding Licensure, Certification and Medical Education of Physician Assistants" has been accepted for publication in the Journal of Medical Regulation. Another manuscript entitled: "Choosing a Provider: What Factors Matter Most to Consumers and Patients?" has been submitted for publication to the Journal of Patient Experience. A third manuscript entitled: "Public Experience and Perspectives with Medical Care Provided by PAs" will be submitted to JAAPA in June. Moreover, NCCPA plans to assess for trends in public perspectives of the value of certification and will conduct another national public survey in 2021. Findings from the 2021 survey will also be shared through various conferences and peer-reviewed manuscripts.

Ensuring that its certification program and credential are valued by stakeholders is important to NCCPA. We continually assess the components and requirements of our certification and explore opportunities to continue to evolve our certification program to maintain and enhance its relevancy and utility to our stakeholders. NCCPA seeks to publish research in open-access journals to ensure they are readily available to all who are interested. As additional information is obtained and manuscripts are published, NCCPA will continue to update the resources available on our website.

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