

Lessons from Physician Assistant (PA) Fellowship: Supporting PA Transition to Practice through Education, Feedback and Professional Development

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Background

Transition to practice can be turbulent for new graduate APPs (advanced practice providers)^{1,2}. They face steep learning curves in the clinical setting², which could create inefficiency, difficulty with task management and reduce ability to participate in education or extra clinical interests. In contrast, PAs (physician assistants) that participate in the Brigham and Women's Hospital PA fellowship are provided with additional support in their transition.

APPs that have participated in post graduate education have reported enhanced confidence in roles and increased job satisfaction³.

Objective

To identify areas where PA fellows have additional support in their transition to practice and highlight areas to enhance support of new graduate PAs.

Methods

Survey participation request sent via email to newly hired PAs 2022-2023, evaluating those that graduated in 2021 or later. Participant email information was provided by PA leadership in our organization and not limited to department or specialty. Survey questions included graduation date, start date at our institution, participation in post graduate training, frequency of meeting their direct supervisor, frequency of receiving evaluations and feedback, frequency of attendance of hospital provided education (example-APP grand rounds) and participation in extra-clinical activities.

Results

- Surveys were sent to 49 PAs hired in 2022 -2023 at BWH
- Collected 19 responses
 - No participants had post graduate PA training
 - One eliminated: graduated before 2021

During First Year of Practice	PA Fellowship	New Hire PA
Length of Onboarding	12 months	28% 6 weeks or less 28% 6-12 weeks 44% > 12 weeks
Met with Direct Supervisor	Weekly	33% At least monthly 50% Every 3 months 17% Every 6 months or less
Performance feedback frequency	Every 2 months	33% At least quarterly 50% Only during 90-day eval 17% Every 6 months or less
Attending hospital sponsored educations	Weekly	33% At least monthly 45% Quarterly or less 22% Never
Extra-clinical Work	Yes	17% Yes 83% No

Discussion

Although new hire PAs were provided onboarding and met frequently with direct supervisors, there are areas to enhance support when compared to PA fellowship training. Providing more frequent performance evaluation feedback, supporting attendance to hospital sponsored education, and encouraging extra clinical engagement during the first year could augment a PA's transition to practice.

This may require the newly graduated PA to assume this responsibility when transitioning to practice. New PAs may have to seek out feedback from supervisors, make time during lunch breaks or on days off to attend education and learn to balance project participation with clinical responsibilities.

Conclusion

Employing strategies to address education, feedback and extra clinical participation could boost early career growth, increase job satisfaction and impact retention in the early career PA workforce.



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