

CTVS PA Evaluation and Certification

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Faculty Disclosures

- **Employee/contractor with NCCPA**
- **No other financial relationships to disclose**



Certificates of Added Qualifications (CAQ)

Overview of CAQ History

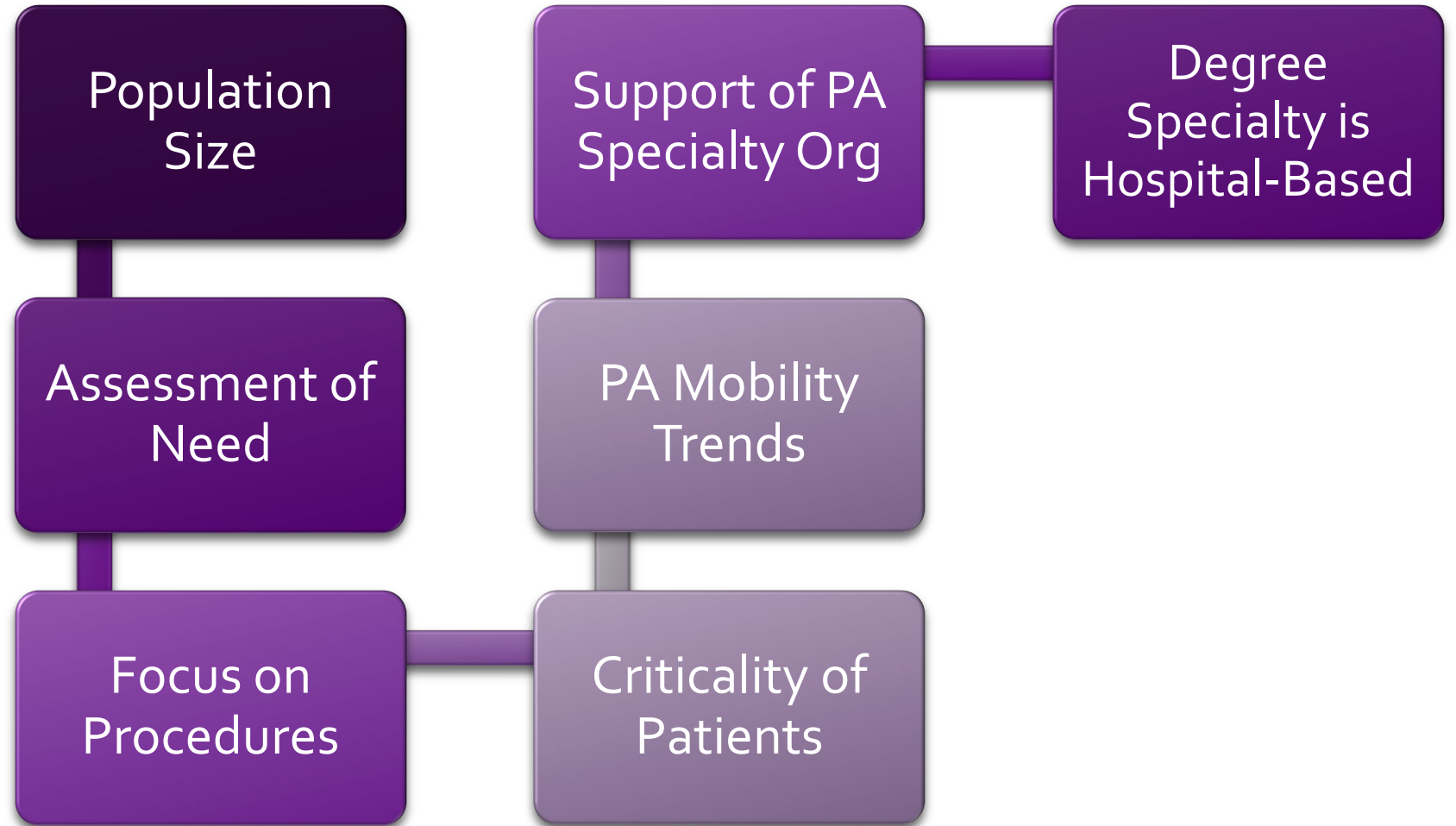
- Years of debate culminated in a February 2006 decision to develop a new specialty recognition program
 - Had been hearing from PAs who needed something to document their knowledge/expertise
 - Timing was right for NCCPA to broaden the services provided to PAs to include a new specialty assessment program
- Embarked on extensive fact-finding and discussions over the next 4 years
 - June 2006 meeting with 30+ PA and physician specialty groups
 - Additional meetings with PA and physician specialty groups
 - NCCPA task force dedicated to this issue

Key Principles of the CAQ Program

- **PA-C** is the **primary generalist credential for all PAs**, giving PAs the credibility and flexibility to change specialties.
- The CAQ program is **voluntary** and well suited for PAs committed to a particular specialty.
- The program has been developed to be **inclusive**, recognizing differences among and within specialties.
- The CAQ is an **added** credential that does not replace the PA-C, hence the name.

Which Specialties?

Factors Considered



Which Specialties?

- Cardiovascular & Thoracic Surgery
- Emergency Medicine
- Nephrology
- Orthopaedic Surgery
- Psychiatry

- Hospital Medicine
 - Pediatrics
- Added later,
first exams
in 2014

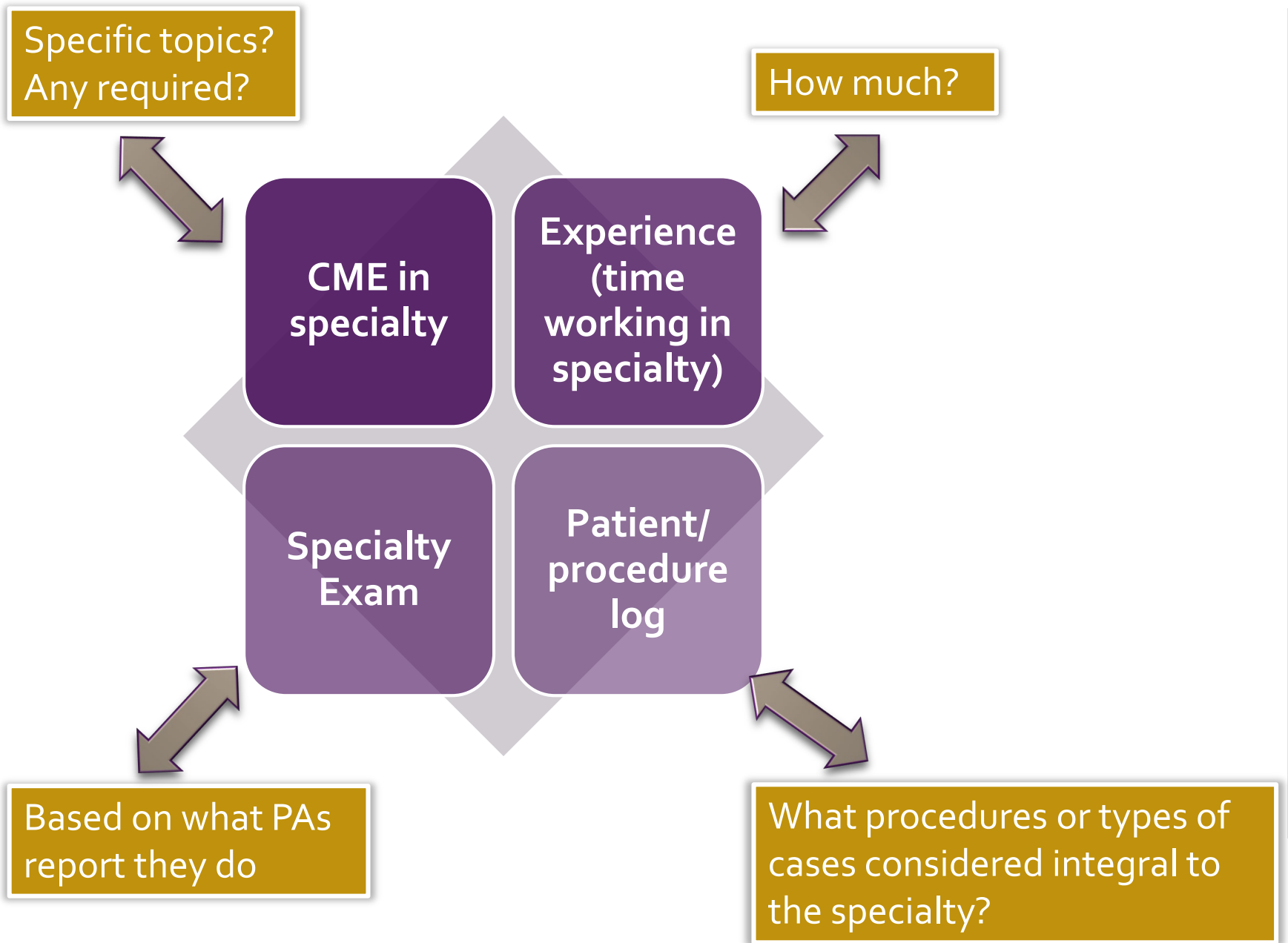


Overview of CAQ History

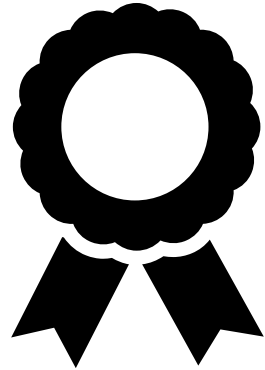
Specialty Advisory Groups included 2 appointees invited from each of the following:

- the PA specialty organization
- the physician specialty organization
- PA-Cs practicing in the specialty

Advisory Committees Considered...



Overview of CAQ Requirements



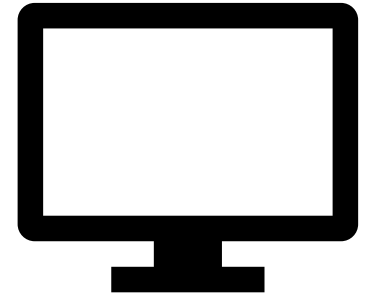
Prerequisites

- PA-C
- License



Non-Exam

- CME
- Experience
- Procedures/
Patient Cases



Exam

- 120 MCQs
- 2 times per
year

- Non-exam requirements can be completed in any order
- Procedures/Patient Cases physician attestation can be submitted after the exam

Specific CME Requirements & Recommendations for CVTS CAQ

150 Category I CME credits in CVTS topics

- Earned within past 6 years, 50 within past 2 years
- Must include Advanced Cardiac Life Support
- Recommended CME topics
 - post-op critical care management
 - surgical management of coronary artery disease, congenital heart disease, thoracic disease, central and peripheral vascular disease

Experience & Procedures/ Patient Cases

Experience

- 4,000 hours (the equivalent of two years of full-time practice)

Procedures/Patient Cases

- Suggested list of potential procedures and patient management for the CVTS specialty
- Attestation from physician who works in the specialty and is familiar with the PA's practice and experience
 - Attesting that the PA *has performed* the procedures and patient management relevant to the PA's practice and/or understands how and when the procedures *should* be performed
 - Physician attestation can be provided after the exam

Quality & Industry Standards

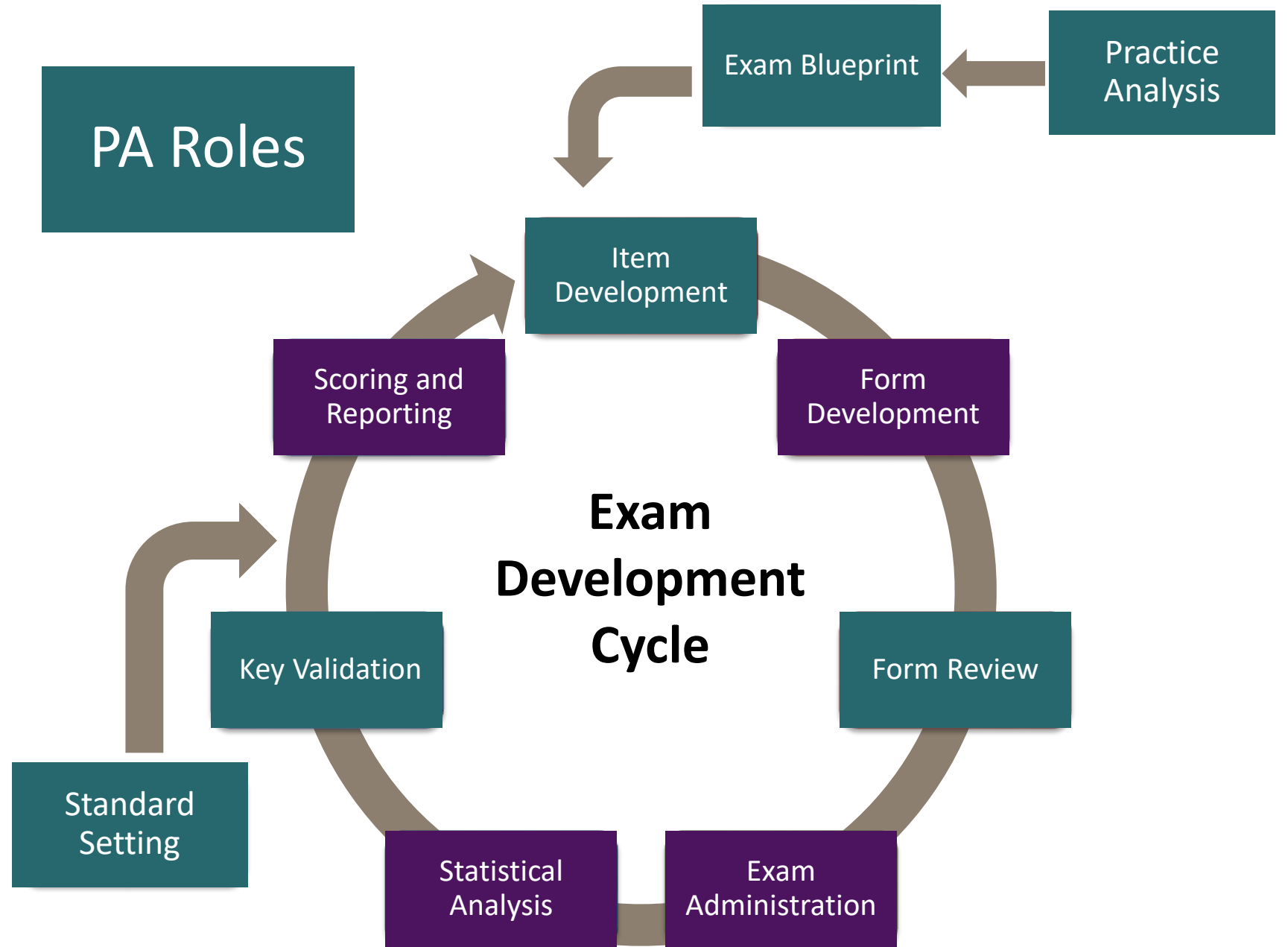


- NCCPA is accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies
- NCCPA's exam processes comply with industry standards and reflect "best practices"
- PAs are involved throughout the exam development process
 - Clinically practicing
 - Diversity in a wide range of demographics
 - Reflective of the profession and population
 - Separation of responsibilities
- We have been able to recruit and retain a team of highly skilled and experienced psychometricians and test development staff to work on NCCPA's exam programs



CAQ Exam

CAQ Exams



Practice Analysis and Exam Blueprint

- PAs convene at NCCPA to provide feedback and input on cardiovascular and thoracic topics that should be included on a survey
- Survey is disseminated to PAs working in the specialty
- PAs convene to review the survey results and provide recommendations on the exam content blueprint

Item Development

- ~10 to 12 PAs serve on item writing committee
 - Strive for diversity in age, race/ethnicity, years of practice, geographic regions, etc.
 - Clinically practicing in the specialty
 - Submit sample items
- Write assignments remotely and attend an in-person meeting to review all exam items
- Items that pass the scrutiny of the group are added to the pool for potential use on exams

Form Development

- Psychometricians build forms based on the blueprint
- ~5 PAs attend a forms review meeting to review all items on the form for accuracy, currency, queuing of content, etc
- Form goes through multiple rounds of QA as part of the publishing process

Exam Administration

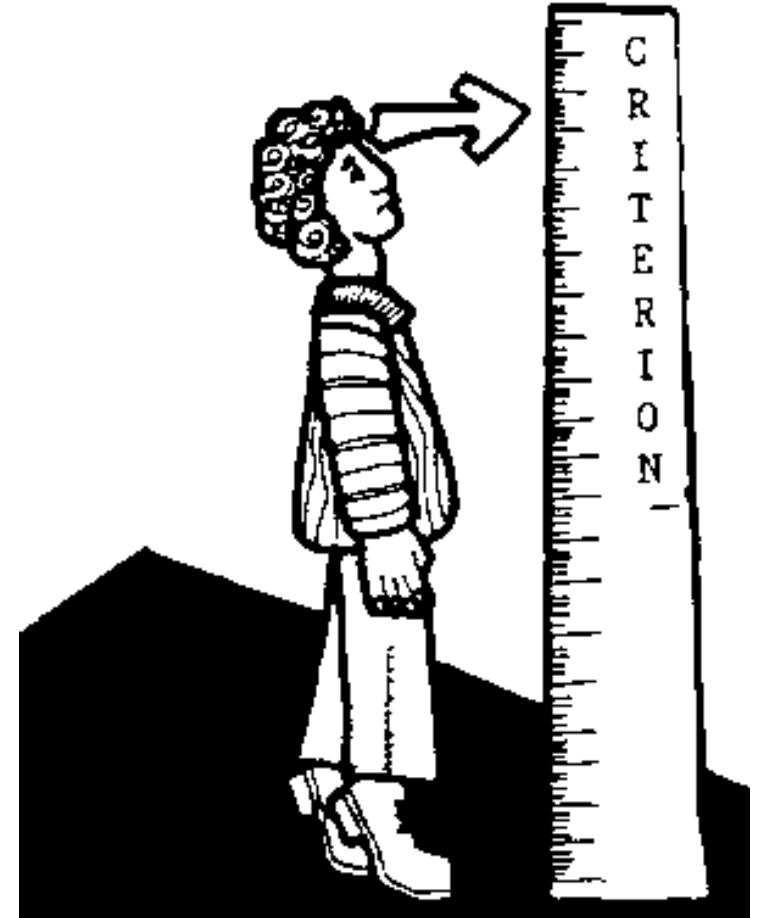
- 120 questions targeted to certified PAs working in the specialty
- 2-hour exam
- Administered nationwide during 2 exam windows per year at Pearson VUE testing centers.
- Response files transmitted to NCCPA for score processing
- *To view the content blueprint, disease and disorder list, sample items and practice exam, visit www.nccpa.net*

Key Validation

- Psychometricians analyze response data to identify any items that do not perform as expected
 - Correct answer (key) is not the most frequently selected response
 - An incorrect answer is selected more than the key
 - PAs who have a higher overall performance provide an incorrect response more frequently than PAs with lower overall performance
- Group of PAs convene to review the items flagged to determine if there is a problem with the items
 - If yes, the items are removed from scoring and flagged to prevent future use on an exam.
 - If no, the item can be scored.

Standard Setting

- ~12-15 PAs convene to participate in an in-person standard setting
- Use a criterion (content-based) standard
- Significant time is spent discussing what a “just qualified” candidate can or can’t do and would or wouldn’t know



Standard Setting

- Multiple rounds where each participant goes through every question on the exam and provides a rating of whether the “just qualified” candidate would answer the question correctly
- Between rounds, psychometricians analyze responses and provide feedback to participants
- End product of the standard setting: a recommended level of content that participants must answer correctly to pass the exam
- Recommendation is provided to the board for consideration and approval

Score Processing

- Staff implement the approved passing standard and process scores
- Multiple QA steps throughout the process
- Scores reported to PAs

CAQ Recipients

1,464 CAQs have been awarded 2011 - 2018

- 783 in emergency medicine
- 271 in psychiatry
- 164 in orthopaedic surgery
- 110 in hospital medicine
- **51 in CVTS**
- 57 in pediatrics
- 28 in nephrology

What We've Heard From PA-Cs Who Have Earned a CAQ in CVTS*

Top Benefit Achieved After Earning a CVTS CAQ

- Personal satisfaction (68.4%)
- 47.4% of PAs with a CAQ would recommend the program to PAs practicing in cardiovascular thoracic surgery

What We've Heard From PA-Cs Who Have Earned a CAQ in CVTS*

CVTS CAQ Recipients vs Other CAQ Recipients

- More likely to be male (63.2% vs 53.3%)
- Have higher median age (47 vs 42)
- Have higher median years certified (16 vs 11)
- Earn over \$150,000 (66.7% vs 25.5%)
- Practice in hospital settings (84.2% vs 62.5%)

Latest Update Regarding the Overall CAQ Program

- At its August 2018 meeting, the NCCPA Board of Directors reaffirmed its commitment to the CAQ program
 - Staff was tasked with exploring potential modifications to the various requirements for the program in order to enhance flexibility
 - Staff was also tasked with the initial exploration of alternative knowledge assessment options
 - The Board will consider such potential changes to the CAQ program over the next year
 - At this point, no definitive plans for adding specialties to the CAQ program, but the Board will be revisiting the factors considered when new specialties are added in the future

Questions?

Thank you!

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