



Alaska Chapter, American College of Emergency Physicians

Position on Scope of Practice

As Emergency Physicians we value the role of Advanced Practice Providers (APP) as members of a physician-lead healthcare team. However, we have reservations about independent practice for PAs.

Patients want access to physicians - Patients do not just want access to any health care, they want access to physician led care. Multiple studies and surveys demonstrate a strong preference for receiving healthcare from a physician.

Patients are confused about roles in healthcare - Many studies demonstrate confusion by patients regarding the roles and levels of training by various types of healthcare providers. Multiple states have passed laws restricting the use of the title of “doctor” by nonphysicians to prevent patient confusion.

No cost savings - Multiple studies demonstrate increased testing, specialty consultation, ED visits, and hospitalization by APPs translating to higher costs for patients. Studies also demonstrate more inappropriate opioid and antibiotic prescriptions by APPs.

Less training - Education matters. PAs complete 2 years of school prior to clinical practice and have no residency training requirement. Physicians are required to complete 4 years of medical school followed by 3-10+ years of residency/fellowship training.

Quality of training-Experience mattersMuch of physician training occurs in accredited large academic medical centers. Typically, residents and fellows spend up to 80 hours a week for 3-10+ years in intensive direct patient care responsibilities. Most programs have designated numbers of supervised procedures required in order to graduate in a given specialty.

There is no required residency training for APPs and much of the clinical training can occur in non-research outpatient facilities with variable responsibilities and exposure.

The training and curriculum are fundamentally different for APPs. As a paralegal wishing to become a lawyer or a drafter wanting to become an engineer would need additional schooling and training, APPs have the option of pursuing additional training through medical school.

No specialty training - PAs do not undergo any specific accredited specialty training and are not board certified in specific specialties. There are already specialty clinics that are staffed exclusively by PAs and NPs in Alaska that do not have a collaborating board-certified specialist (dermatology, neurology, endocrinology). Many patients who go to these clinics believe they are being treated by specialty trained physicians.

PAs can still own and operate clinics - There are many examples in Alaska of clinics that are owned and operated by PAs who have physician oversight and that employ physicians.