



AAPA posts 2006 physician assistant census data

By Christopher Doscher, news editor, *AAPA News*

More than 23,000 PAs responded this year to AAPA's Annual Physician Assistant Census survey, the results of which were released on October 6, the beginning of National Physician Assistant Week. Every year, AAPA staff collect and analyze data to track growth and changes in the PA profession. The surveys are sent to all PAs, not just AAPA members. Results of the annual census survey are posted on the AAPA Web site at www.aapa.org/research and are used in various projects throughout the year. Customized reports can be ordered, and salary profiles, which answer the question "How much do PAs, in a position with a specific set of characteristics, earn?" are available to AAPA members.

The news remained positive for PAs who are considering asking their employers to cover the cost of their AAPA membership. About two thirds (64%) of those who responded to this year's survey and report working at least 32 hours per week at their primary clinical job reported that their employer pays 95% to 100% of their annual AAPA dues. Employers also have shown a willingness to pay for AAPA annual conference registration fees, with 57% of respondents saying that their employers pay for 95% to 100% of the cost of registering for AAPA's annual conference. PAs also reported employer support for membership to state PA chapters, with 57% of respondents reporting that their employer paid for 95% to 100% of state chapter dues.

Data collected on the 2006 census survey indicated no major shifts in profession trends. About 63,000 PAs were surveyed between March 15 and September 15. This year's census was posted online, and survey forms were mailed to all individuals who were believed to be eligible to practice as PAs as of December 31, 2005. This year's participation rate (33%) was similar to the 2005 response rate. A strong majority of this year's respondents (91%) reported working in clinical practice.

The most common type of primary employer among clinically practicing respondents was a single-specialty physician group (32%), followed by a university or other type of hospital (22%). Solo-physician practice (13%) and multispecialty group practices (13%) followed. Family practice/general medicine (27%) was the most common specialty practiced for primary employers, followed by surgical subspecialties (22%), internal medicine subspecialties (11%), and emergency medicine (10%).

The average total annual income for PAs who work at least 32 hours a week for their primary employer showed a slight increase from the 2005 census, with respondents reporting an average income of \$84,396, up from \$81,129 in 2005 and \$78,257 in 2004. For respondents who graduated from a PA program in 2005 and work at least 32 hours a week at their primary clinical job, the average annual income was \$71,004.

Postgraduate PA program accreditation

The Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) has developed draft standards for the accreditation of postgraduate PA educational programs. The draft standards have been posted on the ARC-PA Web site at www.arc-pa.org/Post_Grad/post_grad.html, along with instructions on how people can comment on them. ARC-PA will be accepting comments until January 12, 2007.

Partnership for Prescription Assistance helps more than 3.3 million patients

By Christopher Doscher

The Partnership for Prescription Assistance (PPA), which offers a single point of contact to more than 475 public and private patient assistance programs, has benefited more than 3.3 million patients around the country. AAPA is a participating partner in the PPA, along with pharmaceutical companies, health care providers, patient advocacy organizations, and community groups. In October 2005, AAPA hosted the Help Is Here Express, a traveling enrollment center that promotes help for people who have trouble affording prescriptions. More than 46 million Americans are without health insurance, and many are unaware of the assistance programs for which they may be eligible.

Because lack of access to a health care provider can often prevent patients from finding assistance, the PPA has added a database to its programs that connects patients with free health clinics and health care providers in their communities. More than 45,000 patients have received information through that database, the PPA reports.

Those needing assistance to afford prescriptions may contact the PPA at (800) 4PPA-NOW (477-2669) or visit the program's Web site, www.pparx.org. Information is available in both English and Spanish.

PAs can play a critical role in spreading the word about the PPA and other prescription assistance programs. PAs and other health care providers may need to sign patient application forms, add prescription information, or mail or fax the application to the program on the patient's behalf.