

A NOVEL APPROACH TO EDUCATING NON-PHYSICIAN PRACTITIONERS IN CRITICAL CARE

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Introduction

Work force shortages, resident work hour restrictions, increasing ICU census and patient complexity have led to the need for appropriately trained NPPs to help provide critical care services to this specialized population.

Hypothesis

Implementation of a critical care training program based on a fellowship model tailored to physician assistants (PA) provides appropriately educated NPPs for critical care medicine (CCM).



Figure 1: PA Fellows in didactic conference.

Methods

Over a two year period at an academic health care center, five PAs completed a 52 week intensive advanced education program in critical care medicine.

PAs received didactic and clinical education built on MD postgraduate teaching, including full participation in:

- PA specific weekly lecture (figure 1)
- Postgraduate weekly CCM curriculum
- Morbidity and Mortality conferences
- Journal club



Figure 2: Plans are formed at the bedside with the attending physician

PAs performed in a role similar to that of MD postgraduates, including case presentations on rounds (figure 2), performing ICU procedures, and taking call.

All PAs successfully passed a final assessment prior to graduation.

Results

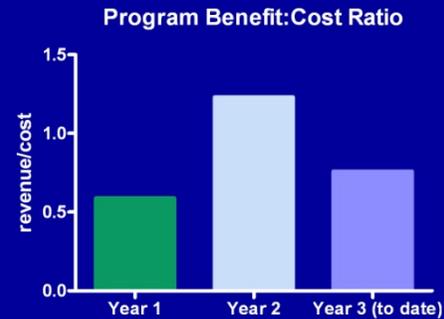


Figure 3: Program revenue as a function of program cost, by year. Yearly revenue per trainee normalized for clinical months worked.

5/5 PAs successfully completed the one year program

All PAs learned a core set of procedural skills including:

- Central Access (figure 4)
- Arterial access
- Tube Thoracostomy
- Emergency airway management
- Management of complex monitors / devices

All PAs demonstrated decision making in patient care, and showed a caring and compassionate attitude for critically ill patients.

PAs demonstrated use of current evidence to support and improve the practice of CCM and made a positive impact on resource allocation and cost.

The program is cost effective (figure 3).



Figure 4: PA fellow placing a central venous catheter

Conclusion

A critical care education program in an advanced subspecialty training model is a novel and cost effective method of successfully providing trained NPPs in CCM. Such training programs may help alleviate the shortage of critical care providers.¹

References

¹ Angus DC, Kelley MA, Schmitz RJ, White A, Popovich J Jr. Caring for the critically ill patient. Current and projected workforce requirements for care of the critically ill and patients with pulmonary disease: can we meet the requirements of an ageing population? JAMA. 2000;284:2762-2770.