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NEBRASKA
ACADEMY OF
PHYSICIAN
ASSISTANTS

Nebraska PA

The Official Newsmagazine of the Nebraska Academy of Physician Assistants

www.nebraskapa.org

Nebraska Coalition for Patient Safety

Submitted by: Darwin Brown

As many of you know, the Nebraska Academy of Physician Assistants (NAPA) has been heavily involved with the patient safety concept since the first ripple back in 2002. The Nebraska Hospital Association sponsored a state-wide meeting to highlight the problem of patient safety in 2002, and NAPA representatives were invited to participate. From this meeting developed a patient safety work group, which was tasked with identifying critical issues that needed to be addressed in an effort to monitor and hopefully decrease the number of patients harmed each year in Nebraska health care facilities. Ultimately, our group introduced legislation that was passed in 2005, forming the Nebraska Coalition for Patient Safety.

As a NAPA representative, I have been involved in this process since 2002. Our Academy was one of five founding members of the Nebraska Coalition for Patient Safety (NCPS). The other sponsoring organizations include the Nebraska Hospital Association, the Nebraska Medical Association, Nebraska Nurses Association, and the Nebraska Pharmacists Association. Each partner group was allotted two seats on the Board of Directors. Patty Scholting joined the group in 2005 and was promptly elected as the Secretary of the Board.

So what have we been doing over the

last four years? A very good question. Anytime you create something from scratch, it takes some time to get the infrastructure in place, develop policy, create a vision and direction, and identify funding sources. When the Unicameral signed legislation creating the NCPS, it did so without providing any funding. This resulted in a slower process than we anticipated. The five founding organizations have contributed roughly \$30,000 as seed money to get NCPS established. The NCPS is making great strides in collecting data from Nebraska hospitals on patient errors. From this data has been created a monthly *Patient Safety Report*, which is sent to members summarizing an event reported to the NCPS. The Report shares the causal factors identified by the reporting facility, links to resources to help reduce risk, and asks the reader if this error could happen in their facility.

In addition, the Coalition has made strides in creating our reporting form that is utilized by members to report errors or near-misses; organized the Patient Safety Conference, which will be held in Kearney on Tuesday, August 18; held four education-

al workshops throughout the state on root cause analysis; developed a fee structure for hospitals to join the Coalition; and has just hired a Field Coordinator, who will begin to run the day-to-day operation and become the public face to our organization.

P a t t y

Scholting and I have been involved with the ongoing development of the Coalition. The main focus of the NCPS currently is identifying and minimizing hospital-based errors. Plans to expand to clinics and physician offices will be developed in the next few years. Although PAs might not see patient safety as a big issue, it is important to realize that every time you step into the hospital or the emergency room, you have the potential to be involved in an unfortunate patient outcome. Many of the Nebraska hospitals have taken a proactive role in making patient safety a priority, and undoubtedly many of you have been included in these efforts. The NCPS is always looking for other interested volunteers to serve, so if you are so inclined, please contact Patty or myself.

Darwin Brown (dbrown1@unmc.edu)
Patty Scholting (pscholting@unmc.edu)



NAPA Board of Directors Meeting

October 3, 2009

9 a.m.

Anderson Management Inc
1335 H St # 100
Lincoln, NE

NAPA Board Meetings are open to all members

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Greetings From the New NAPA President

Submitted by Mia Hyde, PA-C

Welcome to a new NAPA year of leadership. I will be your captain, so to speak. I hope you are a forgiving group. I have big shoes to fill following the leadership of Jon Monk, aka Billy Callahan. Yet, I am determined to fulfill your faith in me in serving as your president. Thank you.

I have been picking my brain trying to decide on a topic for this month's newsletter, and I keep coming back to the question... "What has NAPA done for me lately?"

That is a question I am sure has come to the mind of many Nebraska PAs. Well, I would love to have all of our members, as well as non-members, become aware of all that your professional society does for PAs in Nebraska.

Acting on behalf of you, the membership, NAPA performs the following functions:

- Serves as a resource for Nebraska PAs. I don't know how many times I have had to consult NAPA staff or board members regarding a professional practice issue, or to clarify a state rule or regulation. I know several members utilize these benefits as well. Bonnie Shearer, of course, has been an incredible resource and has earned a special place in my heart. We have all kept Bonnie on her toes.
- Provides continuing medical education.



Mia Hyde, PA-C

Our annual Spring CME conference in Kearney is very highly attended each year—not just by Nebraska PAs, but by PAs from several surrounding states as well. The caliber of educational topics and the atmosphere presented always brings a large number of returning attendees each year. I have served several years on the planning committee and am aware of the amount of time and effort that is required to bring this affair together. We have a fine group of committee members to thank for keeping the bar high on the quality of CME that is continually offered at a low cost by our state.

- Strengthens public relations. During the last several years while I have served on the NAPABOD, we have been working to make the PA image more common to the public. One example would be the promotion of PAs during National PA Week in October. Mailings of postcards to hospital and clinic administrators last year was also an effort to confirm the importance of PAs to the communities they serve and health care in general.
- Advocates for patient safety. NAPA has played a key role in the formation and development of the Nebraska Coalition for Patient Safety. NAPA is one of the five founding member organizations for the Nebraska Coalition for Patient Safety. As a founding member in

this coalition, we are demonstrating our commitment to ensuring the safe delivery of health care in Nebraska. NAPA has provided monetary support, and representatives from NAPA have devoted a great deal of time and energy to the formation of this organization. As a founding member we have positioned ourselves as a core part of the leadership in the coalition. Darwin Brown and Patty Scholting currently serve on the Nebraska Coalition for Patient Safety Board of Directors.

- Monitors legislation affecting health care and patient welfare. Do we even need to go there? The last couple of years have been a monument to this definition of NAPA and its benefit to members. LB195 had its beginning in a survey given at a Spring CME conference, polling attendees regarding their need for less restriction of practice environments. Bonnie Shearer took the lead on the survey findings and approached the Nebraska Medical Association (NMA) with a similar poll. From there, it is one for the history books. We have had great and much-appreciated support from the NMA. If you are not aware of the LB195 details or its effect on your practice, take the time to go to the Nebraska Health/Human Services Web page licensing section for the main points. It went into effect 8-29-09.
- Works to better PA reimbursement. The actions taken to try to divert BCBS's change in reimbursement for PA services was not successful, but it did show a tremendous effort by NAPA in accord with the AAPA, Nebraska PAs and other health care team members. I would still call that a small success in the support found by our fellow providers.

These are just a few of random (not rambling) thoughts that I can recall re: "What has NAPA done for me lately?" I think NAPA has earned my small membership fee for the year. Thank you to all the tireless volunteers that make our society strong. And if you want to be one of the few, the proud...you would be welcomed with open arms!

UNMC Alumni Reunion Weekend October 2-3 2009

www.unmc.edu/alumni/

Friday events on UNMC campus.

Friday evening events include reception honoring
Jesse Edwards, cofounder of PA program.

Saturday events at Embassy Suites Downtown.

Nebraska Vital Records Notice to Nebraska Hospital Association

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services- Division of Public Health Office of Vital Records wishes to inform you of important changes to birth, death and fetal death certificate registration.

1. With the passage of LB 195- Physicians Assistants will be permitted to complete birth, death and fetal death records when authorized by their supervising licensed physician. This statute will go into effect August 30, 2009.

This will affect birth clerks and medical records staff that complete the birth certificates at your facilities. Please notify these individuals of the up coming change. Changes will be required to the Attendant Table in order to list a Physician Assistant as the Attendant on a Birth Certificate. For instructions on how to add a PA to the tables consult the subscription page for the “Step by Step Instructions”. The subscription page is located at <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/vitalrecords/partners/> or call (402) 471-8275. Once you are at the subscription page click on the click on the birth link. To allow PA’s to complete death or fetal certificates please contact the Vital Records office at (402) 471-8275.

2. Upon activation of the influenza notification component of the Electronic

Death Registration System (EDRS), the Office of Vital Records (EDRS) will enable EDRS linked funeral establishments to notify the Division of suspected flu cases.

The recent emergence of a novel Influenza A (H1N1) virus has forced public health officials to prepare for the possibility of unprecedented influenza-related illnesses and deaths. It’s important for public health purposes that the Department of Health and Human Services is notified of influenza-related deaths in a timely way.

Consequently, the Division of Public Health has embedded a new influenza notification component in the Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS) to be used by Nebraska Fu-

neral Establishments.

At the discretion of the Director of Public Health, this field may be activated in the event of a significant disease outbreak in Nebraska. Currently these boxes have been activated. The boxes are located on the Disposition tab on the EDRS death certificate. Funeral Establishments will see a query that will ask, “Influenza Related Death?” The choices will be Y for Yes, N for No or U for Unknown/Don’t Know.

Additional information concerning H1N1 can be located on the Vital Records Subscription pages at <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/vitalrecords/partners/>

Once you are at the subscription page click on the Death and/or Fetal Death Link

Legislative Update


Submitted by Bonnie Shearer, MS, MPAS, PA-C

The PA Committee, subcommittee of the Board of Medicine and Surgery, met July 17, 2009. They began discussions on drafting new Rules and Regulations in accordance with the newly passed PA legislation. The law takes effect August 30, 2009. Changes made by the Uniform Credentialing Act will also be incorporated and will make the regulations rather lengthy. The committee was led by Chairman Paul Shellabarger, PA-C. Representatives from DHHS’s Regulatory Affairs and Investigations (Mike Grutsch, PA-C), as well as NAPA, were present. The committee spent most of the discussion on PA/MD ratios and waivers, and standards of supervision standards for PAs with less than two years of experience. There was agreement that there should be different time together requirements in that first two years based on how many months the PA has practiced. This group thought a minimum of 20 PA charts per month should be reviewed by the physician. There will be NO mandated time together requirement or patient chart review in regulation for PAs with at least two years of experience.

Discussions are at a very preliminary

level currently. The PAC will review their recommendations mid-September and, if approved, forward the draft to the Board of Medicine and Surgery for its review. The process will be lengthy. If the Board of Medicine and Surgery approves them at that time, a public hearing will be held tentatively at the end of the year or early 2010. After input at the public hearing, the regulations go back to the PAC and Board of Medicine for review, then on to the Board of Health. Once the Board of Health approves the regulations, they are forwarded to the Director of Public Health, the Attorney General, and finally the Governor. Each one of these steps will be closely monitored by NAPA. We are hoping to avoid the tremendously long and arduous process our last regulation update underwent in 1985—that took five years and twelve Attorney General opinions!

Meanwhile, NAPA has asked for clarification regarding what steps PAs and supervising physicians have to take in the interim in order to stay in compliance with the new law once it is effective August 30. NAPA will also be scrutinizing the suggested Scope of Practice agreement for necessary changes. More information will be forthcoming once it is obtained.



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The Nebraska PA is the official publication of the Nebraska Academy of Physician Assistants, 1335 H Street, Suite 100, Lincoln, NE 68508-3784. Comments, ideas and suggestions are welcomed. Articles for submission should be sent to the editor. Publication dates and submission deadlines are as follows:

Deadline	Publication Date
Oct. 17, 2009	Nov. 17, 2009

Russ Coash, PA-C, Managing Editor

Joe Designer, Inc., Graphic Design and Printing Services, 427 Sharp Street, Glenwood, IA 51534, 712-527-9565, joe@joedesigner.net

In the Board Room

NEBRASKA ACADEMY OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS MEETING TYPE: General Membership MEETING DATE: April 17, 2009

MEETING MINUTES

Call to Order at 12:22PM by President Jon Monk, PA-C.

ATTENDANCE: Aquorum was established by a standing count, with approximately 99 members in attendance.

Introductions - The Board members were recognized to the general membership. Patty Scholting, Chuck Scholte and Jodi Chewakin were absent.

President's Address: Jon Monk

Thank you went out to the board members and to Anderson management staff for their commitment to NAPA. 2008 was another busy and successful year for NAPA. The BOD was busy first with the update of the NAPA website, and then came a hard fought battle with Blue Cross and Blue Shield over reimbursement. Letters were written however despite everyone's efforts the fight was lost. Another legislative breakfast was held again in Feb. 2009 at Billy's.

Secretary's Report:

The minutes of the 4/13/07 General Membership meeting were presented by Secretary, Penni Jackson for review by the general membership. No corrections were presented. It was motioned and seconded to accept the minutes as submitted. This motion was approved unanimously.

Treasurer Report:

Dave Powell presented the NAPA Balance Sheet and financial report showing the financial

Status of NAPA as of 12/31/08. Copies of these reports are on file.

The biggest hit this year was from the development of the new website. Year end assets for 2008 were \$430,251.74 Last year (2007) we were right at \$500,000. Dave explained how the first quarter of the year is

when we raise the majority of our income, with the dues for the CME conference and membership renewal.

Nebraska P.A. Foundation: Darwin Brown

Darwin introduced himself as the last remaining member of the Foundation. He explained that the foundation for 13 years has raised money for scholarships for the students at UNMC and Union College. After some Bylaw changes the foundation will be eliminated, becoming a committee of NAPA. An appreciation went out to Michael Grutsch, Jon Ries and all the other members of the Foundation for all their hard work.

The proposed Bylaw Changes are:

No questions were asked. It was motioned and seconded to accept the changes. This motion was approved unanimously.

Website update: Michelle Christensen

Michelle asked everyone to please check out the new website if you haven't already. She announced that the committee is no longer just one person, and thanked the committee for all their help. She explained the biggest problem with the website is the database. Currently there are 1800 people in the database but less than 400 active members. Unfortunately in correcting this problem many members might end up losing their accounts. An apology was expressed ahead of time for any inconvenience this might cause. Also an apology was given for the delay in sending out membership cards to the students. Reminder your log on is now your NAPA ID #.

Membership Update: Mia Hyde

Review was given by Mia about the proposal for the dues increase. It has been over 10 years since the last increase in NAPA dues. With the increase in cost of living,

decrease in grants from pharmaceutical reps., and after researching what the surrounding states are charging for annual dues; the BOD voted to increase the annual dues to NAPA. The research on the surrounding states showed NAPA is way below average, with most of the surrounding states charging \$100-\$125 for their annual dues. Therefore the new dues for 2010 will be \$100 per year for fellows and associates, \$75 for sustaining members, ½ price for first year members (\$50) and students will remain free.

CME Conference Update: Dara Schroeder

Dara reported we have 270 in attendance which is down from 320 last year. Thank you went out to Wendy Clifton for her guidance over the past year. Introduction and thank you also went out to the members of the CME Committee for their hard work. She encouraged planning committee involvement, as well as completion of the survey in each attendee's packets regarding preferences for future CME conferences. She announced there will be a brief meeting at 3:30 today to discuss initial planning for next year's conference, which anyone is welcome to attend. Dara also acknowledged the student member's involvement and contributions to the success of the CME conference. She discussed changes that are anticipated in the future including the decrease in grants because of the limitations being placed on the pharmaceutical reps. Subsequently there will probably be a slight increase next year in the cost of the CME conference.

Board Succession/Election Call: Mia Hyde

Mia encouraged people to become more involved within the organization. The deadline to submit platforms for board positions is 4/30/08. The open positions this year are President-Elect (3 year), one BOD-at-large (3 years) and one HOD (3 years). Election will take place in 5/08 and elected members

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July 2009 BOD Meeting Summary

The NAPA Board of Directors met on July 11, 2009 at Anderson Management in Lincoln, NE. Jon Monk called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Roll call was taken, and a quorum of voting members was established. Minutes of the April 15, 2009 BOD meeting was approved as presented. Jon Monk immediately turned the meeting over to Mia Hyde, as the current NAPA president.

President's Report

Mia Hyde submitted a written report. She has assisted in finalizing nominations for NAPA Board elections and performed free skin cancer screening as a local fundraiser for the Melanoma Research Foundation. She is attempting to reactivate the Diversity Committee and to produce a new member brochure, a new NAPA brochure, and promotional items for new members. She reported that she was involved in finalizing acceptances for new BOD members on the Web site, as well as planning for the annual health fair/cancer screening at her local clinic. Mia has continued to offer networking assistance to central Nebraska PAs.

Past President Report

Jon Monk gave a verbal report on recent HOD activities. While at the national meetings he met with AAPA CEO, William Leinweber, and Director of State Government Affairs, Ann Davis. Jon represented NAPA at the recent Cattleman's Ball; also he signed forms to transfer funds from LCIF to AAPA Foundation.

Treasurer's Report

Dave reviewed the income/expense report. He reported that income is approximately 90.52% of projections, while expenses are 63.30% of projections. The income taxes have been filed with Dana Cole but not completed due to changing federal reporting requirements.

BOD Member-at-Large Report

Dara submitted a written report. She states she will be serving as CME Committee Chairperson for the current year. She has been actively recruiting new members to this committee and expects

two new members, but has room for many more. She has inquired if NAPA would be interested in partnering with the Nebraska Spine Center to promote a Fall Pediatric Spine Conference in Omaha. This would require minimal investment and time from NAPA members. She plans to participate in a medial mission to Falmouth, Jamaica, later this month. In years past they routinely treat hypertension, diabetes, and superficial dermatological infections. On an average day they will treat 100 patients.

Russ Coash offered a verbal report; the July newsletter has been mailed. He asked about setting deadline dates on newsletter articles to facilitate meeting deadline dates. Chuck S. asked about mailing a newsletter prior to the spring CME as well as making copies available to CME attendees. He also suggested including a spring CME brochure in this mailing.

Committee and Liaison Reports

Membership: Andy reported a little more than 350 paid members; membership cards are pending update and cleanup of the data base. Dara and Jon suggested that we wait until next year to send membership cards vs. sending cards late this year for '09. Mia addressed development of a new member welcome letter as well as a NAPA informational brochure.

Computer: Jon reported that HOD reps need a laptop at the HOD meeting. Dave will ask HOD for budget needs next fall when the budget for 2010 is developed

NAPA Office: Andy Licht, Anderson Management, attended Web site meetings, mailed newsletter to 745 recipients, reviewed services provided by Anderson to cover in new business. Discussion of the NAPA data base and how to identify students; this will be discussed further with the Computer Committee.

Legislative: LB 250 passed, effective date 8/29/09. Bonnie plans to attend SBME to work on rules and regs. In the past this has been a long, drawn-out process. Mia suggested checking on a lobbying day for the next session; she felt this maybe more effective than a legislative breakfast.

Reimbursement: Chuck Scholtes reported that he anticipates more private insurance companies will cut PA reimbursement fees, following the BCBS lead. This is not just Nebraska alone, but across all states. Also concerned with WPS and interpreting Medicare reimbursement issues; however, there is no recourse available to NAPA.

Professional/Public Relations: Need to plan for PA week. Mia asked how we can increase recognition of PAs in Nebraska. Chuck suggested incorporating something at the annual convention for PAs. Jon suggested using public service announcements on television stations; AAPA has possibilities. Mia will send AAPA templates to Andy for evaluation for public service ads in radio and newspaper for upcoming PA week.

HOD: Chuck suggested a gift card for HOD reps in range of \$100 to purchase a computer. NCCPA suggested going to an 8-10 year recertification cycle to be on par with other medical arenas, but charge for test will likely increase. However, no change is expected in the near future. North Central meetings, plans to reactivate are still questionable.

Patient Safety: Patty offered a verbal report. August 18, 2009, is the first annual Patient Safety Conference in Kearny. This will be a full-day event. Patti and Darwin will attend. They have asked for financial support for mileage and room as they will be representing NAPA on the committee.

Nebraska PA Foundation: Tom Grothe reported the Foundation no longer exists; \$98,665.20 has been transferred to the AAPA Foundation. The Grants and Scholarship Committee will be reactivated. NAPA rules and regs are being developed to be presented at the October meeting for NAPA approval. Darwin is working on scholarship applications. Grants will be managed on a "pass through" basis, such that grants are budgeted by NAPA and then paid through the PA Foundation. Scholarship awards will be based on investment income annually; thus the principal will remain unused.

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Meeting Minutes: April 17, 2009 *(continued from page 4)*

will assume duties 7/1/08.

AAPA House of Delegates Hot Topics: Tom Grothe

No huge topics are up for discussion in the HOD this year. AAPA has realigned itself to become more of a voice in the medical community by becoming more present in the media, email, websites, etc...

Update on Rules and Regulations: Bonnie Shearer

Bonnie announced Stephanie Vanderfield has started to play an active role in legislation for PA's and Paul Schellabarg is now on the PA medical committee. Bonnie reported on the activity in the last legislative session-. NAPA continued to support and apposed many of the bills as usual. The LB250 was introduced by Senator Mike Gloor. A thank you went out to Senator Mike Gloor along with the Grand Island PA's for their help. No negative action has been taken against the bill. Not everyone is receiving the email alerts from AAPA unfortunately regarding the bill. Bonnie explained how

the medical model has changed therefore the bill proposes 1) Change the standard of supervision for PA's after 2 years of experience, giving them more flexibility. 2) Increases the MD/PA ratio from 2 to 4. 3) Allows PA's to sign death certificates. 4) Allows PA's names to be the only name on the prescription. The only insurance that needs the physicians name is Medicaid which will be the next challenge to try to change. 5) Eliminate the need to credential the PA's supervising MD, which in turn eliminates a lot of paperwork and fees.

Introduction and thank you went out to Jodene Schmidt PA-C who took time out of her busy schedule to come to Lincoln and testify for the bill. This was a huge plus.

Thank you also went out to Liz Rose and Ann Davis

It was explained that Mike Gloor unfortunately was unable to pick LB250 as his priority bill; therefore our bill was amended with bill 195. LB195 however is a priority bill that is still on the agenda yet for this year session. If and when the bill

is approved it will come in affect 90 days after being signed. The next step then will be to outline supervision. A question was asked about the professioncy exam which Bonnie explained nothing has changed. Any further questions can be emailed to Bonnie at bshearer@unmc.edu

Open Floor: Questions and Answers

Question was raised, whether there were any other duties for the Nebraska Physician Assistant Foundation. It was addressed by Darwin that the foundation was strictly only for scholarships.

With no further questions or concerns from the membership, it was motioned and seconded to adjourn the meeting. All in favor. No opposition. Meeting was adjourned at 1:16PM.

Next meeting: April 16, 2009 at 12:00pm at next year's Annual Spring CME conference

*Respectfully submitted, Penni Jackson, PAC,
Secretary NAPA Board of Directors*

July 2009 BOD Meeting Summary *(continued from page 5)*

CME Committee: Dara Schroeder, written report on file. Income was less than projected, but expenses were much less than budgeted. Dara included comments from participants, several positive and few negative comments. Next CME Conference is scheduled for April 14-17 at the Holiday Inn and Conference Center in Kearney. All rooms will be nonsmoking next year.

Student Reports: UNMC-Lea Wells presented a written report. The class has been busy academically and recreationally. In addition, Lea reports the UNMC program participated in SAAPA and donated books to the literacy program. New student orientation is scheduled for August 19th for 42 students. Clinical rotations begin September 28th, with some international rotations to South Africa, Mexico, and Belize.

Program Reports

UNMC Program: Tom reported UNMC preparing for next fall. Jesse Ed-

wards will officially retire July 1.

New Business:

NAPA Office: Andy provided printout of services provided by Anderson Management; annual contract renewal is in July. He will provide a proposed contract and updated fee schedule. The Executive BOD is responsible for the annual negotiations.

Newsletter: Jon motioned, second by Mia to print a newsletter 2x/year, in June and December; this will include spring CME information. Discussion followed. Motion passed.

Discussion centered on providing expenses for Patti and Darwin to cover costs of attending the Patient Safety Meeting in Kearney. Motion by Mia to provide for one night motel and travel costs to be paid by BOD travel account; second by Russ. Motion passed.

Dara described the proposed Pediatric Spine Conference at the Crown Plaza in Omaha on October 2, 2009. No fees will be collected to attend. NAPA has agreed to partner. Jon motioned that NAPA cosponsor, Chelsie seconded. Mia requests that any fees be brought to the Board for approval. Motion passed.

Mia reported the need to update and issue credit cards to Past President, President, President-Elect, and Treasurer; this will be accomplished by Dave Powell, Treasurer.

Jon reported that Roger Wells has been contacted by the Nebraska Academy of Physicians to combine CME to serve both academics. Roger will pursue this.

Meeting adjourned by President Mia Hyde at 12:45 PM. Next meeting scheduled for 9:00 a.m. on October 3, 2009 at the NAPA office in Lincoln.

*Respectfully Submitted, David Powell, Treasurer,
acting for Penni Jackson, Secretary*

Canadian Forces PA Program Students Awarded Degrees from UNMC

Submitted by *Stephane P. VanderMeulen, MPAS, PA-C*

The UNMC Physician Assistant Program completed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on June 23, 2009 with the Canadian Forces Physician Assistant Program to award Bachelor of Science degrees to graduates of that program. The University of Nebraska has been the degree-granting institution for the U.S. Military Interservice

Physician Assistant Program for many years and now will provide this service to the Canadian military as well.

On July 28, 2009, Dr. Mark Christiansen, Associate Director of the UNMC PA Program, presented diplomas to a graduating class of 23 students during an honors convocation ceremony at Borden Base near Barrie, Ontario, Canada. The Physician Assistant profession has been

a part of the Canadian military for many years, but the profession is very new in the civilian sector in Canada. These Canadian Forces PA graduates will be the first PAs in Canada to receive academic degrees of any kind. Two other civilian programs, the University of Manitoba and the University of Toronto, currently have inaugural PA classes in progress.

Enabling Alcohol and Drug Abuse in The Workplace

Health service professionals devote their lives to helping people and often have difficulty accepting it when they need help themselves. Health service professionals are more susceptible to alcohol and drug addiction than the general population. Many perceive medication as the only appropriate care for their ills, including emotional or physical pain. Some have easy access to a supply of prescription medications. Also, some have extensive knowledge of drugs and feel they can prevent addiction because they can control their use of the drug.

Alcohol and drug abuse has been and continues to be an important factor to consider in the practice problems of health service professionals. Professionals who abuse typically have problems with attendance, personal appearance, relationships at work, practice competency and even safety issues. The substance abuser does not check their substance abuse problems at the door and others are adversely impacted. This has a negative impact on their confidence in their colleague and it can be destructive to the morale of the work group.

The best way for those dealing with a colleague with a substance abuse problem is to not ignore it or cover up the conduct or problems that result from the abuse or addiction. Ignoring or covering up for an abuser is called enabling. Examples of enabling in the workplace would be repeatedly offering to take on more than one's fair share of the work because a colleague is "going through a rough time," feeling sympathy, instead of empathy, for the colleague and frequently covering up for them, or rationalizing that it is not that big of a deal when a colleague regularly comes in late and has hangovers or smells like alcohol. Patterns of enabling by one or more co-workers generally indicates a pattern of alcohol or drug abuse by a colleague.

Many health service professionals do not receive the appropriate intervention and treatment they need due to lack of their colleagues encouragement to seek assistance on their confrontation of them when the problems are obvious. Some common warning signs that alcohol and drug abuse may be present in your workplace:

- Unsatisfactory work/chart performance
- Unreasonable behavior
- Frequent absences or illness
- Decreased workload
- Defensive if questioned/confronted
- Discrepancies in treatment orders, progress notes, medication records

- Disorganized schedule
- Unexplained absences
- Excessive ordering of drug supply
- Inaccessibility to patients and staff
- Alcohol on breath
- Frequent incorrect medication/narcotic count

Enabling the substance abuser is easy. Confronting them is hard because there are usually difficult issues to be faced. However, there is a greater good that will be achieved when the abuser overcomes their alcohol or drug abuse – for themselves, their families, those they serve and their colleagues.

If you have further questions about the Nebraska Licensee Assistance Program, or feel that you may benefit from assistance from the NE LAP, please contact the NE LAP Coordinator, Judi Leibrock or NE LAP Counselor Tricia Veech, at (800) 851-2336 or (402) 354-8055.

Meet UNMC's Newest Faculty Member

Patty J. Scholting, PA-C has now been a full-time faculty member at the University of Nebraska Medical Center for a year. She has agreed to share with us her thoughts and observations after having a year of academics.

Scholting joined the PA program's staff on July 1, 2008. She is the program's newest faculty member. In addition to continuing to see internal medicine patients, she has many academic responsibilities, officially holding the title of Academic Coordinator. Prior to joining the staff at UNMC, she preceptored numerous PA students on clinical rotations.

NebraskaPA:

What has surprised you the most about academics?

Scholting:

The amount of work, energy, and research that goes into developing academic curriculum, lectures, writing exams, and clinical skills workshops. Much of my day, if not lecturing, is spent planning for future events.

NebraskaPA:

How has being an instructor changed how you treat patients?

Scholting:

It has helped me become a better patient educator. It has reminded me always to take the time to educate your patients until they reach a level of understanding that is vital to the successful management of their illness.

NebraskaPA:

What advice would you give to a PA considering academics?

Scholting:

Prior to entering academia most of my day was spent on my feet solving health-related problems on the spot. In the academic world it is about planning, research, and meetings. Issues are resolved over a period of time and not in one day.

NebraskaPA:

What do you like most about being an instructor?

Scholting:

The interaction with the students. It is important to connect with the students to



Patty J. Scholting, PA-C

ensure their success in the PA program. As faculty, our office doors are always open to students. Understanding where they are coming from helps me to understand where they are going.

NebraskaPA:

What are your favorite topics of instruction?

Scholting:

Endocrinology and Women's Health. I have a passion for thyroid disorders, diabetes management, and other adrenal issues. Women's health care has been a big part of my practice in internal medicine.

Relating to my patients as a female and as a health care provider has been key in the successful management of health issues related specifically to women. I also enjoy the clinical skills workshops and working hands-on with the students in suturing techniques, IM/IV administration, and orthopedic procedures.

NebraskaPA:

What's the most important advice for students entering PA school?

Scholting:

Organize your time. Developing study skills is important in the success of your post-graduate education. Set time out for studying as well as personal and family time. It is all about balancing your life so as not to get overwhelmed. The PA education is not so much about rote memorization but about learning as much as you can and then being able to apply that knowledge to the practice of medicine.

NebraskaPA:

What information do you most want your students to internalize by the time they graduate?

Scholting:

The importance of professionalism in the practice of medicine. To embrace excellence, ethics, humanism, accountability, and altruism in our interactions with our colleagues and with our patients. To recognize the importance of the interdisciplinary health care team.

Influenza Information

Nebraska Health Department Influenza "Start Page"

<http://www.hhs.state.ne.us/influenza/>

10 Steps You Can Take: Actions for Novel H1N1
Influenza Planning and Response for
Medical Offices and Outpatient Facilities

www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/10steps.htm

Antiviral Medication Recommendations

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/recommendations.htm>