2016 HEALTHCARE TRENDS: HOW CERTIFIED PAS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

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TREND #1: THE PATIENT IS THE MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

• Now more than ever providers are charged not only with patient-centered care but also with patient satisfaction and engagement. Certified PAs can increase patient satisfaction and engagement through:
  • Education and counseling of patients and families
  • Follow-up to ensure compliance
  • Coordinating care
• Certified PAs can be the primary provider for a patient panel and/or they can run specific programs that engage patients closely, like managing Medicare’s annual wellness visits or holding group appointments for diabetic patients.
TREND #2: PATIENTS WANT MORE HELP WITH WELLNESS

• While early treatment and effective management of medical problems are vital to good health, health maintenance, screening, and early diagnosis are key to patient wellness. The wellness trend is exploding beyond the doctor's office into restaurants, workplaces and even churches. Certified PAs are educated in prevention and communication techniques and know how to lead patients through this discussion and then refer them to specialists or programs that can help.
TREND #3: CONSUMERISM DRIVES DEMAND FOR CONVENIENCE

• Patients are choosing what services they want and how they are delivered. Convenience means more at-home tests will be available, like strep tests and infusions. Retail health will also increase access to care in populated areas, and telehealth will grow in rural areas. The availability and cost-effectiveness of certified PAs will make them attractive in settings where they may be the only providers but have the technology to communicate quickly with physicians via images, phone and EHRs.
TREND # 4: THERE WILL BE INCREASED EMPHASIS ON VALUE

• Now more than ever, payers want proof of healthcare outcomes. Are patients getting better? Are readmissions under control and declining? Data collection and analysis will be a priority for all large hospitals and healthcare systems, and even independent physicians. Faced with resource constraints that include a physician shortage and cost ceilings, it makes sense to expand your practice reach with certified PAs who can help increase patient coverage, provide continuity of care and improve patient engagement.
TREND #5: THERE WILL BE RENEWED FOCUS ON CONTINUITY OF CARE

• There is a great deal that practices and providers can do to improve outcomes through greater follow-up on patient compliance. This trend is tied to technology as some of this is automated via e-mail and phone reminders, but it extends to providing case management solutions such as personalized calls, group education sessions, and even home visits. Certified PAs can help practices develop and implement care follow-up programs that will keep patients as healthy as possible.
TREND #6: NEW TECHNOLOGIES WILL CONTINUE TO DRIVE HEALTHCARE DELIVERY

• The demand for transparency throughout the healthcare chain will drive the need for more open and robust EHRs. The use of patient portals for a 24/7 connection to scheduling, messaging, and EHR information will continue to increase in popularity. Mobile applications are booming, and gaming apps that teach and deliver care are growing in importance along with social media and wearable devices. The PA profession is a young one with a median age of 38, making them prime users of these newer technologies who are able to communicate the relevance of new technologies to their patients.
TREND #7: CHRONIC CARE MANAGEMENT WILL INCREASE

• Seniors are signing up for Medicare at the rate over 10,000 per day. Two-thirds of Medicare patients have two or more comorbidities, and one-third have four or more. In 2015, Medicare started paying $42 a month, per patient, for non-face-to-face communication that includes a comprehensive care plan for the patient. PAs are also eligible providers under this Medicare program, and practices will be reimbursed fully when they manage these patients.
TREND #8: MENTAL HEALTH WILL INTEGRATE WITH PRIMARY CARE

• According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, approximately 43 million Americans will experience some type of mental illness every year. Primary-care providers need to inquire about mental health whenever indicated by a patient visit and during the annual physical. Many certified PAs work for psychiatrists helping to manage mental health patients and their medications, including some who have earned a Certificate of Added Qualifications (CAQ) in Psychiatry. The CAQ indicates the PA has earned substantive CME in the specialty, received a physician’s attestation and passed a national psychiatry exam.
TREND # 9: PRESSURE WILL INCREASE TO CONTAIN HEALTHCARE COSTS

• Can the ACA force cost controls especially at a time when industry consolidation is reducing the number of insurers? The fact that PAs can do much of what a physician can do at a fraction of the cost means that they should be considered in the staffing solution of every medical group, hospital, and physician practice. Using PAs in creative ways and settings (e.g., for mental health services or in telehealth) enables them to practice at the full extent of their license and makes sense for the nation's healthcare system and patients.
TREND #10: MORE PROVIDERS WILL BE NEEDED IN END-OF-LIFE CARE

• Since 14.5 percent of the population is now over 65, it is realistic to expect that more patients will require palliative and end-of-life care. Currently that treatment is primarily offered in hospitals, but the demand will increase for delivery of this care in other settings, including the home. Although Medicare does not use the term "palliative," Medicare plan Part B does provide some coverage, as do many private insurers. PAs are great additions to the support teams that care for these patients, based on their communications skills and the quality of care they deliver.