

PA HISTORY ... What Is This Ticket For?

BY PAM MOYERS SCOTT, MPAS, PA-C

This ticket was for admission to the PA banquet and reception held at the Wichita Falls Country Club in conjunction with the "First National Conference on New Health Practitioners," which was technically the first American Academy of Physician Assistants conference.

FIRST NATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON
NEW HEALTH PRACTITIONERS

Cocktails and Banquet

WICHITA FALLS COUNTRY CLUB

Tuesday, April 10, 1973 - 6:00 p.m.

The main conference was held at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas, from April 10 through 12, 1973. The conference was co-sponsored by the AAPA, the Association of Physician Assistant Programs (APAP) and its subsidiary organization, the American Registry of Physicians' Associates.

The financial statement for the conference, which was attached to the AAPA executive committee meeting minutes of Oct. 12, 1973, indicated that attendance was approximately 230 individuals. After paying expenses that included 16 invited speakers, the conference netted \$2,933.18, allowing the planners to repay the AAPA and the APAP \$500 each for "seed money" to plan and advertise the conference to PAs, nurse practitioners, MEDEX graduates and other practitioners trained in a variety of medical and surgical specialties. Hence the title of the first conference was for "New Health Practitioners" and was an early attempt of the PA profession to be inclusive of other models of education.

By 1994, approximately 3,700 PAs and PA students attended the 22nd annual AAPA conference in San Antonio. Attendance at the 32nd annual AAPA conference in Las Vegas in 2004 surprised everyone, including AAPA staff and leaders. A record-breaking 9,000 or so PAs and PA students attended, and the conference drew nearly 11,000 overall attendees, including guests, lecturers and exhibitors. The event offered 379.5 hours of CME sessions and workshops.



Pam Moyers Scott is the immediate past president of the American Academy of Physician Assistants. She is a member of the Board of Directors and is the chair of the Publication Committee of the Society for the Preservation of PA History. She is a family practice PA in rural West Virginia.

For more information about the Physician Assistant History Center and the Society for the Preservation of PA History, go to www.PAHx.org, or go to www.ADVANCEweb.com/pa and follow the links.

PA HISTORY ... What's Wrong With This Picture?

This is the program patch from the Alderson-Broaddus College Physician Assistant Program for students who were enrolled in the PA program until the 1980s. In the outer ring of lettering, "physician" contains an apostrophe S.

The American Academy of Physician Assistants voted to delete the apostrophe S from the official title of the profession in 1980 because it connoted "ownership" by the physician. Interestingly, the Association of Physician Assistant Programs didn't include the apostrophe S in its title when APAP was founded in 1972.



The title of the PA profession has been a controversial subject almost since the inception of the profession. The term "physician's assistants" was first used at Duke University Hospital as a pay category in the 1960s for ex-medical corpsmen who had been hired as clinical support personnel to help physicians with their workloads. The term "assistant" was endorsed by the American Medical Association during its House of Delegates meeting in 1970.

The AAPA changed its official name to "physician's associates" in the spring of 1971. The change was brought on by the "growing ambiguity in the use of the term 'physician's assistant'" by less-trained and less-qualified individuals. However, the name change was unacceptable to the AMA, and the AAPA relinquished the "associates" designation, conceding to the AMA's wishes in order to smooth the way for the adoption of education standards by the AMA's House of Delegates and to gain professional representation on the Joint Review Committee for Physician Assistant Education that would oversee the accreditation process.

Many other titles have been suggested for the profession, including physician associate, associate physician, junior physician, junior doctor, medex, syniatrist (Greek for *syn*, meaning "along with" and *iatrist* for "relating to medicine"), Osler (for the famous physician), health care practitioner and associate practitioner.

Regardless of all these suggestions, the AAPA House of Delegates last considered the name issue in 2000 and voted to continue the title of our profession as "physician assistants."

Pam Moyers Scott is past president of the American Academy of Physician Assistants. She is a member of the Board of Directors and is the chair of the Publication Committee of the Society for the Preservation of PA History. She is a family practice PA in rural West Virginia.



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PA HISTORY ... What Is This Group?

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The American Registry of Physicians' Associates was the precursor organization to the Association of Physician Assistant Programs. It was formed in 1970 by PA educators who were concerned about the quality of the training of PA graduates from the growing variety of PA programs that were evolving at the time.



Through standardized examination of students and skills-based studies of graduate PAs in practice, the educators wanted to assure the public and potential employers that graduates of registry-approved PA programs had the necessary clinical skills and knowledge to provide quality health care. Students in registry-approved PA programs could apply to the registry, pay a fee and be certified as "registered physician associates."

Once registered, they could place RPA after their signature, wear this registry pin and a patented insignia patch on their lab coats and display their registry certificate on their office walls.

Two years after the registry's formation, its board of directors and its member programs in 1972 voted to establish a new umbrella organization, APAP, to meet the need of educators while continuing the registry as a subsidiary organization.

The following year, 1973, the board of directors of the American Registry of Physicians' Associates voted to relinquish their duties to the American Academy of Physician Assistants so that "professional PAs could register practicing PAs." That also was the year in which the first national certifying examination for PAs was administered by the National Board of Medical Examiners.

In 1975, the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA) became fully operational, and the AAPA determined that the commission replaced the role of the registry and dissolved it entirely.

At its peak, the registry had 12 member programs and 125 RPAs. Today 133 PA programs are APAP members, and 52,206 PAs are certified by the NCCPA.

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