

Physician Assistants Celebrate New Law Approving PAs to Provide Hospice Care to Medicare Patients

February 9th marked a historic day for Physician Assistants in Hospice and Palliative Care. Congress passed and President Trump signed into law The Medicare Patient Access to Hospice Act (H.R. 1284). This legislation allows PAs to act as the attending physician for hospice patients. Previously, Medicare only allowed physicians and nurse practitioners to act as such.

“The passage of the Medicare Patient Access to Hospice Act will allow PAs to be reimbursed for providing hospice care to Medicare beneficiaries; this had been one of the biggest obstacles to full PA practice in HPM (allowing us to *truly* provide the “H” part) and a goal that has been on the top of the list for PAHPM since our organization was formed years ago. I could not be happier to see the efforts of our organization (and so many others) produce this new opportunity that will allow PAs to provide care for their patients throughout their lifespans,” said Donna Seton, past PAHPM president.

This legislation also allows PAs to perform “other functions” in hospice care aligned with the scope of practice. Physician assistants have been advocating for years to be included in the Medicare language for providing hospice care and they have finally been heard.

“This is long overdue recognition of the value PAs have in caring for patients with serious illness,” said Dr. John Morris, Four Seasons Palliative Care chief medical officer and Teleios Collaborative Network CMO. “PA’s have been working as excellent leaders in palliative care, but have not had the opportunity to care for their same patients if they transfer into hospice. Now patients can have their PA who knows them and has cared for them in palliative care or primary care continue to care for them in hospice.”

With the large shortage of hospice providers, this legislation makes end of life care more accessible, especially to rural and medically underserved areas.



PAHPM Legislative Chair Jeanine Smith meets with Oklahoma Senator James Lankford to discuss the role of PAs in Hospice and Palliative Care.

“This act being signed into law is a victory not only for PAs but for the patients we serve,” said PAHPM president Rich Lamkin. “There is a growing need for hospice and palliative care services within the United States. PAs can and will help meet this need by widening their practice into hospice care.”

The Medicare Patient Access to Hospice Act takes effect January 1, 2019. Lamkin stated, “There is still much work to be done, but we couldn’t be more excited for the chance to usher in new opportunities for PAs to care for patients in the field of hospice and palliative medicine.”

Want more information about this new law? Click below for the full text!

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/1284/text>

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OF PRIME IMPORTANCE

PAHPM Annual Meeting

May 22, 2018

5-7p.m.

Hilton New Orleans

Riverside Hotel

Royal Room

AAPA Impact 2018

Attending AAHPM?

Join other PA’s at the PA Special Interest Group Annual Meeting!

March 15th

5:45p.m.

More details available at the conference

A SPECIAL THANK YOU

PAHPM would like to formally thank everyone who advocated for PA rights in hospice. Without the many hours spent writing letters and placing calls to senators and representatives, participating in advocacy days and marches to the Hill, educating healthcare administrations, and various organizations educating on the role of the PA and garnering support for our profession in hospice and palliative medicine, this bill would not have been possible. We would like to extend a special thank you to:

- Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY)
- Senator Tom Carper (D-DE)
- Representative Lynn Jenkins (R-KS)
- Representative Mike Thompson (D-CA)
- American Academy of Physician Assistants
- American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine
- National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization
- National Coalition for Hospice and Palliative Care
- PAHPM members past and present!

Thank you for your support!

What's Next for PAs and Hospice Care?

The Medicare Patient Access to Hospice Act opened many doors for PA practice in hospice and palliative medicine, but there is still a lot of work to be done. PAHPM has already received numerous inquiries about hospice and palliative medicine education opportunities, training requirements, and general questions about what this law means for PAs. PAHPM is diligently working with AAPA and the PA Sig in AAHPM to answer these questions and provide guidance. Specifically, PAHPM plans to:

- Create a formal response to the new law
- Produce avFAQ document to distribute to AAPA, AAHPM, NHPCO, and our members
- Develop a student questionnaire about knowledge of hospice and palliative medicine to hand out at the AAPA Annual Conference
- Collaborate with AAPA and PAEA to develop a standardized curriculum for end of life care for PA students
- Formulate a list of education opportunities and competencies for practicing PAs wanting to transition into HPM
- Ensure ongoing relationships with our partners in HPM, especially the National Coalition for Hospice & Palliative Care
- Continue to advocate for other legislation affecting the field of HPM

PAHPM believes education not only about end of life care, but also about the PA profession, is key to PAs success in breaking into hospice care. Our organization stands firm that we have the skill set and resources we need to be successful in hospice and palliative medicine. As stated by Harvey Nix, PAHPM member, in the most recent issue of the Hospice Compliance Letter "We're ready. PAs are well suited to provide this kind of care alongside our physician colleagues."

Interested in helping PAHPM achieve our goals? Want to be part of history for PAs in hospice and palliative care? Join today!

PAHPM Wants You!

Other Legislation for PAs in HPM

The Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act (H.R. 1676) focuses on support of Palliative Care and Hospice Education Centers to improve training of health professionals in palliative care as well as establishment of palliative care internships. The bill is awaiting more signatures from Congress. H.R. 2797, Patient Choice and Care Act, includes PAs as part of the interdisciplinary team providing hospice and palliative medicine.

Please contact your local representative at <http://www.congress.gov/> and ask for support of these bills!

What are your thoughts about the new law allowing PAs to be attendings in hospice care? What questions do you have about this new law? How can PAHPM support you in transitioning to HPM? What hospice or palliative care education do you need?

Post on our Facebook page, tweet at us, post on the blog, or email us!

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