

The National Physician Associate Expansion Programme

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Aims

The National Physician Associate Expansion Programme (NPAEP) is a transformational change programme hosted by The Hillingdon Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. The role of the physician associate (PA) is being implemented across the UK to address workforce planning needs. With small numbers of UK-trained PAs graduating each year and demand for PAs increasing, a need to vastly increase the supply has been identified. NPAEP aims to help meet this need by increasing the number of experienced PAs within the NHS. Through this, the potentials of the PA role will be further be highlighted.

Methods

Interest was developed from host sites across over 40 NHS providers to support the introduction of a substantial number of experienced PAs. The rigorous recruitment of PAs to fill these positions then took place. Methods used included advertising through the NPAEP organisational website, national and international conference stall displays, PA professional body membership correspondence, medical journals, UK and US job sites, social media and word of mouth.

Results

25 experienced US-trained PAs and two experienced UK-trained PAs were recruited and allocated to eight host sites in north-west London, the East Midlands, north-west England and Yorkshire. These are four regions with few numbers of experienced PAs. Recruits' length of experience is on average 6 years, with a concentration in acute medical specialties.

Conclusions

All 27 PAs are where they have commenced work within their regions in order to increase acceptance and knowledge of the role and ultimately contribute to developing a culture ready to accept, sustain and support larger numbers of UK-trained PAs. Therefore, this is expected to advance the role of the PA while improving patient care through a strengthened medical workforce. ■

Conflict of interest statement

I am a UK physician associate director for the National Physician Associate Expansion Programme and a PA at George Eliot Hospital NHS Trust.

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