



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **LET'S GET TO WORK! CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS CALLS ON PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS TO EXPAND THE PA PROFESSION AND LEARN FROM UNITED STATES' EXPERIENCE**

**May 24, 2012, Toronto** – Four Thousand Physician Assistants (PAs) will converge on Toronto for the IMPACT 2012, the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the American Association of Physician Assistants (AAPA). During IMPACT 2012, Canadian PAs are calling on provincial governments to learn from the experiences of our US counterparts.

Even in a down economy, the PA profession in the US continues to expand rapidly. There are currently in excess of 84,000 certified PAs practicing in the US, a 100 percent increase over the last 10 years. AAPA projects that by 2025, there will be 110,000 PAs working in the US conducting more than 350 million patients visits each year.

In 2010, CNN's Money Magazine ranked the PA profession number two on its list of best jobs in America and in 2011, Forbes Magazine ranked the PA Masters degree the best degree for finding a job in the US. The PA profession has existed in the US for more than 40 years, and although there have been PAs serving in the Canadian Forces for nearly 50 years, civilian PAs are a relatively new concept in Canada. Nonetheless, they are already impressing physicians, hospital administrators, and most importantly, patients, with their high levels of skill and their team-based approach to health care.

“The profession has not been as well researched in Canada as it has been in the US because there are only a few hundred PAs practicing here,” says Tim Ralph, Canadian Certified Physician Assistant (CCPA), and President of the Canadian Association of Physician Assistants (CAPA). “There is data; however, that shows having a PA working in an emergency department can help reduce the patients' wait times. We also know that physicians who work with PAs report very positive experiences.”

“The vital need for PAs as part of the health care team is clear. PAs increase access to quality health care that benefits patients and is cost-efficient for the health care system,” says Robert Wooten, PA-C, AAPA President. “We are glad to share the largest PA conference in the world with our Canadian colleagues.”

There are currently 164 PA programs in the US, five of which opened in the past year, and AAPA expects that number to continue to grow. Recently the Obama administration awarded \$32 million in grants to 28 PA education programs to help build the primary health care workforce in the US.

Canada currently has four accredited PA programs offered by the Canadian Forces Health Services Training Centre, the University of Manitoba, McMaster University and the Consortium of PA Education (University of Toronto, the Northern Ontario School of Medicine and the Michener Institute for Applied Health Sciences). Together these programs graduate approximately 75 PAs each year.

At IMPACT 2012, held at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre from May 26-31, leading experts will share their research. The results of the 2011 Canadian PA Survey will also be discussed, which captured data on the growth and utilization of the profession

Hosting IMPACT 2012 in Toronto provides an opportunity for Canadian PAs to meet and share ideas with their American counterparts. “We’re so spread out and isolated as PAs in Canada, and there are still barriers in place that prevent us from working to our full scope of practice,” says Jodi Pachal, a CCPA in an Ontario Orthopaedic practice. “It’s great to look around the conference centre and see all these US PAs who are working in cardiac surgery and interventional radiology and trauma medicine. They’re considered experts in their field. I’d just like to see provincial governments in Canada realize the great potential of PAs the way state governments do.”

PAs are trained in the medical model, practice in every medical setting and specialty, and work in physician-directed teams with other providers to deliver high-quality, team-based care. According to a 2008 study from Duke University Medical Center, PAs add efficiency to the health care system. Essentially, PAs increase the availability of physician services and enhance care that would otherwise be provided by physicians. With an aging population and an explosion of patients with chronic disease, PAs can be a critical member of the health team.

For more information on the AAPA Conference, on PAs in Canada, or to book an interview with Canadian and US PAs please contact:

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**About CAPA:** Canadian Association of Physician Assistants is a nationally incorporated bilingual professional association that advocates on behalf of its members at the direction of a volunteer Board of Directors which represents Physicians Assistants (PA), PA students, and other members across Canada and internationally. CAPA has members in all national regions as well as the Canadian Forces who share a desire to help develop Canadian health care, and to advocate for the professions' model of cooperative, collaborative, patient centered quality health care. Visit [www.capa-acam.ca](http://www.capa-acam.ca) to learn more.

**About AAPA:** Founded in 1968, the American Academy of Physician Assistants is the national professional society for physician assistants. It represents a profession of 84,250 certified PAs across all medical and surgical specialties in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the majority of the U.S. territories, and within the uniformed services. AAPA advocates and educates on behalf of the profession and the patients PAs serve. It works to ensure the professional growth, personal excellence and recognition of physician assistants and to enhance their ability to improve the quality, accessibility and cost-effectiveness of patient-centered health care. Visit [www.aapa.org](http://www.aapa.org) to learn more.