



Position Statement: Appropriate Use of the Physician Assistant Title

Approved on March 2, 2020 by the CAPA Board of Directors

The Canadian Association of Physician Assistants (CAPA) is aware of instances where employers and / or supervising physicians are using the term “Physician Assistant” (PA) to identify individuals who do not have the medical education and training possessed by graduates of an accredited Canadian PA education program.

When this title is appropriated by those who do not have the necessary education and qualifications, or it is conferred to unqualified individuals through an employment contract, it misleads the public and puts patients at risk.

CAPA is strongly opposed to this misuse of the PA title and to any misrepresentation that may:

- confuse patients or put them at risk of harm;
- mislead other health care professionals; or
- otherwise harm the profession as a result of misinformation.

When patients receive care from a PA, they must be confident that their PA has the education, training, and skills to provide high-quality, evidence-based care.

Only individuals who have graduated from an accredited PA education program and are certified as a “Canadian Certified Physician Assistant (CCPA)” by the Physician Assistant Certification Council of Canada should be providing medical care as a PA. The CCPA designation demonstrates that the individual maintains their competencies through Continuing Professional Development and that they are committed to upholding the profession’s Standards of Practice.

To offer further transparency to the public, CAPA maintains [a publicly accessible database](#) of all certified PAs across Canada.

In Canadian jurisdictions where there is no title protection afforded through regulation of the profession, CAPA continues to strongly advocate for PA regulation under the relevant provincial College of Physicians and Surgeons. In addition to title protection, regulation would protect the public from harm and ease patient concerns by establishing a process to investigate complaints. It would also introduce a host of other benefits that would help streamline the delivery of health care services.