

Canadian Association of Physician Assistants Strategic Plan 2019-2021

Who We Are

Physician assistants (PAs) are skilled health care professionals who are trained to practice medicine autonomously, under the supervision of a licensed physician. They deliver a broad range of services in both Canadian public health systems and the Canadian Armed Forces. Across Canada, PAs help make health care services more accessible to patients and more affordable for governments, while making the practice of medicine more manageable for doctors.

CAPA is the national voice of the PA profession in Canada, with a focus on supporting quality standards and competencies and helping to establish the profession within the national health care framework. As demand for PAs grows and they are further integrated in team-based care, CAPA ensures that our members play a role in influencing the policies and initiatives that affect our profession.

Mission

Facilitating improved access to health care for Canadians through quality standards and competencies for physician assistants and establishing the profession within the national health care framework.

Vision

PAs are an integral part of every provincial and territorial health system in Canada.

Overview

History

The previous strategic plan set forth CAPA's direction for 2015 to 2018. At the conclusion of 2018, the Board of Directors determined that the objectives were still relevant and achievable, and the plan was extended for one year.

In March 2019, the Board of Directors embarked on the development of a new strategic plan to guide the organization and the profession for the next three to five years. With several milestones in the previous plan achieved, the goal was to build on the momentum and work towards even greater progress and accomplishments on behalf of our members. Using the CARE framework as a guide, the Board assessed our intended Changes, our key Audiences, our available Resources, and the conditions in the Environment in which we operate.

In March, the Board identified five strategic objectives that would allow CAPA to advance our vision of PAs becoming an integral part of every provincial health system.

Context

Health care is a dynamic and rapidly shifting environment. While no two Canadian jurisdictions are alike in terms of their policies and approaches to organizing their health systems, there are similarities and key trends that will affect our ability to grow the profession and which must be taken into account. Some of these trends include:

- Governments working hard to do "more with less" and deliver quality care with finite resources;
- Looming physician shortages caused by shifting demographics and changing attitudes in terms of work-life balance;

- A shift to team-based care, most notably in primary care, that demands a broader skill mix to manage more complex patients;
- Expanding scopes of practice that enable health care professionals like pharmacists and nurse practitioners to provide more services that have historically been provided by physicians;
- Efforts to redirect care away from hospitals to home-care and other community-based settings;
- Growing demand among patients for virtual care and other digital interactions.

Strategic Directions 2019-2021

Summary

In order to realize our intended future, the Board has identified specific strategic directions that will guide our efforts over the next three to five years:

- **Advocacy** — Strengthen our role as an advocate and ambassador for PA integration.
- **Engagement** — Mobilize members, encourage greater involvement, and grow our value to members.
- **Education and Awareness** — Ensure there is a deep understanding of the profession and appreciation for PAs among key health system audiences.
- **Funding Models** — Propose innovative and sustainable funding models that create incentives to expand the profession.
- **Sustainability** — Ensure our long-term financial capacity to deliver on our commitment to members.

Strategic Priority 1 | Advocate for the Integration of PAs

CAPA will play an essential role in advocating for changes in the health care environment that will grow the profession and further embed PAs in team-based care across clinical settings. Our advocacy will include championing the introduction of PAs in new provinces and advancing opportunities for PAs in provinces where they are currently recognized health care professionals.

Our objectives are to:

Introduce the PA profession into one or more new provinces or territories

- We will prioritize jurisdictions where the combination of external factors (e.g., political environment) and stakeholder relationships gives us the greatest chance of success.
- We will develop and nurture relationships with key influencers who are well-positioned to advance our agenda, most notably provincial medical associations, elected officials, and government staff.
- We will convene forums for physicians and health system decision makers to engage with PAs and supervising physicians to discuss the PA model, with a view to educating and growing our base of supporters.

Realize the introduction of regulation in provinces where PAs are working as unregulated health care professionals

- We will prioritize Ontario and Alberta, where PAs are well-established yet still face significant barriers and limitations due to a lack of regulation.
- We will nurture relationships with key influencers who are well-positioned to advocate for PA regulation, including elected officials, ministry staff, provincial medical associations, physician regulatory colleges, and senior health system leaders. We will develop and steward relationships with interprofessional associations who can also support this issue.
- We will spotlight how regulation can unleash the potential of PAs to further improve patient access to health care services, save money, and increase the productivity of physicians and other health care professionals in these jurisdictions.

Position CAPA as a relevant and essential stakeholder in the development of health system plans and policies

- We will grow CAPA's visibility and extend our voice on issues relating to Canada's health care workforce. We will seek new opportunities to participate in government and association-led interprofessional committees, working groups etc. to benefit our members.
- We will champion PA interests and issues to elected officials, health ministries, health authorities and beyond in a way that aligns our interests with health system policy and practice trends.
- We will seek to collaborate with the Canadian Armed Forces Health Services Group when the profession can benefit from our joint efforts.

Strategic Priority 2 | Increase Member Engagement

Effectively meeting member needs and expanding the PA profession can only happen when PAs across Canada, and within the public and military health systems, are highly motivated and engaged in CAPA's efforts. We will work constructively to involve PAs in our activities, build upon existing engagement initiatives, and create new opportunities for members to get involved.

Our objectives are to:

Boost Member Participation and Create a Community Experience

- We will consult members on how they would like to contribute to our efforts and facilitate opportunities for them to lend their energy, expertise, and voice to our work.
- We will promote two-way dialogue to better understand the needs of the profession and to increase the "stake" members have in our efforts. We will foster opportunities for PAs to participate in the grassroots work of advancing their profession and feel rewarded for making a difference.
- We will spotlight PAs who are helping CAPA achieve our goals to encourage further participation and collaboration by members.

Enhance the Involvement of Our Student Members

- To better address student needs and demonstrate the value of membership, we will improve our communication to students, enhance our collaboration with the educational programs, evaluate student governance in CAPA, and find new ways for students to participate in CAPA activities.

Increase the Effectiveness of Our Member Communications

- We will evaluate our communications with members, building on existing channels and practices, and refresh our collateral.
- We will identify and create opportunities for more direct communication between Provincial Directors and the members in their province (or region) to help foster connections and mobilize members at the local grassroots level.
- We will seek compelling PA stories to boost the impact of our existing marketing and communications efforts.

Strategic Priority 3 | Champion Innovative Funding Models That Will Grow the Profession

In Canada, PA funding structures are complex and vary across jurisdictions—they can also encourage or hinder decisions around workforce planning, and whether the PA profession can be scaled up in provincial health systems. We will work to provide clarity around existing funding models and champion the uptake of funding reform that will facilitate the sustained integration of the PA role.

Our objectives are to:

Clarify the current state of PA funding

- We will create an inventory of current care models and their associated funding models that will help stakeholders understand the environment and consider best practices.
- We will improve our communications around PA funding, to support wider acceptance of the profession and build knowledge about the role funding plays in the profession's expansion.

Promote innovation in funding models

- We will champion innovative new options—like subsidized billing codes for tasks that are delegated to PAs—that would help address obstacles in certain settings (for example, fee-for-service).
- We will endeavour to bring together the stakeholders with the greatest influence over funding decisions, including governments and provincial medical associations, to explore how changes could be most effectively implemented.

Encourage team-based funding models that support the inclusion of PAs

- We will work with stakeholders to build support for reform, so that funding reflects the shift to team-based care and encourages the right care, at the right time, delivered by the right health care professional.
- We will seek to partner with physicians, hospitals, and other organizations to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of the PA model. By clearly articulating our value proposition we can have a stronger influence on funding decisions.

Strategic Priority 4 | Strengthen Our Long-Term Financial Sustainability

CAPA's ability to achieve our vision and maximize the value we provide to members has been hindered by our financial outlook for the past five years. As we get closer to a balanced budget we will slowly have more resources to build our capacity to conduct our work. However, we will continue working to control costs, develop new revenue sources, and maintain the principle of revenue-neutral programming.

Our objectives are to:

Achieve a balanced budget that provides short-term flexibility and long-term sustainability

- We will continue enhancing our conference sponsorship options and explore multi-year sponsorship agreements that provide greater stability.

Diversify our revenue sources

- We will cultivate new external partners to access new resources for our members in a cost-effective manner.
- We will seek to expand established partnerships to increase opportunities to generate revenue.

Grow smart in a cost-effective way

- We will conduct an internal needs assessment that is based on our financial outlook.
- We will invest in new resources to help achieve our strategic plan.

Strategic Priority 5 | Increase Awareness and Appreciation of PAs

The PA profession is considered an emerging profession in Canada and in many parts of the world. While we have numerous allies who strongly support our efforts, CAPA will continue building a culture, inside of medicine and beyond, that recognizes the value of PAs in our health care system. By growing our “social capital” we can support greater understanding and awareness of PAs across the country.

Our objectives are to:

Increase interprofessional awareness and understanding of PAs

- We will work to leverage communication opportunities with interprofessional associations and groups to increase the external visibility of PAs and the quality of information that is circulated.
- We will ask members to act as our ambassadors or help us secure communication opportunities inside hospitals, family health teams, and health authorities etc. to highlight how PAs are collaborative partners in care.

Harness our PAs to raise their profile in their communities

- We will execute a proactive, targeted strategy that helps to position PAs as a common sense and cost-effective addition to the frontlines of our health workforce in their communities.

- We will prioritize jurisdictions where we have the greatest likelihood of uptake and media outlets that our key stakeholders are most likely to follow.

Tell our own story

- We will use storytelling to establish a more compelling narrative about our profession, demystify the PA role, answer questions about our work, and create a space for new voices.
- We will refine our use of targeted social media to educate our audiences and give PAs a voice on the issues of the day.
- We will renew our brand, identity, vision, and mission in order to strengthen CAPA in the eyes of members, governments, and other stakeholders.

Monitoring Our Progress

CAPA is operating in an evolving environment and there is always the prospect of needing to modify our strategic goals as a means of addressing new realities. However, members expect us to monitor our progress and stay on track to succeed. Just as the Board of Directors was actively involved in the preparation of this plan, they will play an essential role in helping us execute our tactics, measure our progress, and evaluate our success.