

# The PAth: Developing an "Acting Intern" Children's Hospital Colorado Advancement Pathway for Physician Assistant Students on the Pediatric Wards



Linsey Weller, PA-C, Sonja I. Ziniel, PhD, MA, Lauren R. Anderson, MD Department of Pediatrics, Children's Hospital Colorado and University of Colorado School of Medicine, Aurora, CO

## **BACKGROUND**

- At our institution, physician assistant students (PAS) has limited opportunity to practice higher level clinical skills, such as care plan execution & writing billable notes, during their inpatient pediatric rotation
- 41.6% of PAS graduates nationally first work in a hospital setting, where these skills are integral job responsibilities
- To address this gap in the PAS clinical education, we created the Acting Intern (AI) Advancement Pathway (Figure 1) to offer select students clinical responsibilities commensurate with that of a graduating medical student

# **OBJECTIVE**

To describe our first year of experience with the novel Al Advancement Pathway and evaluate its feasibility as assessed by impact on the PAS' clinical supervisors

# **METHODS**

- Al Advancement Pathway was offered to PAS transitioning into clinical rotations in 2022-2023
- Supervising residents, fellows, & attendings were notified of PAS on pathway
- Supervisors completed a web-based survey asking about feasibility of supervising pathway PAS & the value of the pathway
- Descriptive statistics used for analysis

#### Before Rotation

- Pathway candidates identified (per criteria).
- Names sent to PHM point person.
- Student reviews pathway criteria in Canvas.

### Day 1 of PHM Rotation (1st of the month)

- Student identifies themselves as pathway student to senior resident + attending (with every supervisor change).
- Student begins asking for observation & feedback.

#### Rotation Midpoint (15th of the month)

- Student emails PHM point person forms:
- Direct Observation Form
- •TEAM form
- Approval/denial within 72 hours

#### Last 1-2 Weeks of Rotation

- Student serves in acting intern role
- Carries 2-3 patients
- Reports directly to senior resident
- Writes billable notes (submitted same day)
- Student continues to ask for frequent feedback (minimum: weekly)
- NOTE: Failure to uphold these responsibilities is grounds for removal of AI status.

### **End of Rotation**

- Student evaluation completed (per usual).
- Student provides feedback on program

#### **Criteria:**

- Participation in pediatric ICU track OR
- Adviser attestation that student is high achieving & interested in pediatric/inpatient medicine

### Review Process: Primary review by PHM point person. Can grant singular approval. Students must be rated as "novice manager" in all skill domains & receive positive comments from TEAM.

Denials reviewed by Associated Medical Director prior to final decision. Students not advancing will be coached in strategies to increase their involvement in patient

#### If student denied advancement

- Review focus areas for improvement
- graduated
- call for patients
- Pend orders
- Advanced

# Figure 2: Feasibility of supervision survey results.

Respondents rated on a 4-point scale whether "supervising a PAS with AI status was... (a) doable, (b) reasonable, and (c) sustainable.

... Doable Amount of Work.

... Resonable Amount of Work.

... Sustainable Amount of Work.

(a)

# RESULTS

- Four PAS participated in the pathway & worked with 23 supervisors in 2022. 1 student was unsuccessful.
- 20 supervisors completed the survey, an 87% response rate. Respondents included:
  - 4 senior residents (for full month)
  - fellow (for 1 week)
  - 15 attendings (for 1 week)
- All senior residents reported completing direct observations required for advancement to Al status
- Feasibility of supervising pathway students was rated highly (Figure 2)
- 95% agreed completely or quite a bit that it is important to offer PAS advanced clinical care responsibilities as an Al

# CONCLUSIONS

- Al Advancement Pathway is a promising means of enhancing the inpatient pediatric education for PAS
- While the pathway requires additional efforts of supervisors, they found the pathway feasible and important
- Data is limited by small sample size, which we will address by continuing data collection next academic year
- Next steps include optimizing the pathway based on feedback & studying the experience & impact of the pathway on its participating students

- Encourage responsibility:
- Signing in as first
- communication skills

# Figure 1: Al Advancement Pathway Requirements & Timeline

Skill domains evaluated via RIME framework include medical knowledge, assessment, management, multidisciplinary communications, calling consults & note writing.