

Dear HR manager / consultant / general practitioner

Employing physician associates

I am contacting you regarding physician associates (PAs) working within your trust/GP practice.

As the UK professional membership body for the physician associate profession, the Faculty of Physician Associates (FPA) is committed to supporting employers of PAs.

The PA profession is expected to be regulated by the General Medical Council (GMC) from the end of 2024. The government consultation on the legislation to bring anaesthesia associates and physician associates into regulation has recently closed, which will enable the GMC to open a statutory register of qualified PAs.

Until regulation is in place, the Physician Associate Managed Voluntary Register, which is managed and overseen by the FPA, sets the professional standards for PAs and provides protection and safety to patients. The PAMVR currently has over 3,500 registered PAs. The FPA believes that holding a voluntary register for PAs remains a fair and appropriate method to protect patient safety as an interim measure.

Registration on the PAMVR involves strict membership criteria; PAs must:

- have completed a PA course at an approved UK university
- have passed both components of the Physician Associate National Examination (PANE)
- agree to abide by the Faculty of Physician Associates' code of conduct
- agree to undertake continuing professional development (CPD).

PAs who have studied in the USA can be granted membership of the PAMVR if they have met the US equivalent qualifications and live or work as a PA in the UK.

I'd like to draw your attention to the NHS Improvement's Developing workforce safeguards guidance,¹ which states; 'It is critical that trusts ensure all physician associates fulfil continuing professional development requirements, receive appropriate clinical supervision... and retain membership of the Physician Associate Managed Voluntary Register' and the *Care Quality Commission (CQC) guidance GP mythbuster: Physician associates in general practice* which states that 'Practices should only employ physician associates who are on this register.'

Therefore, the FPA strongly recommends that all PAs employed within your trust or GP practice are registered on the PAMVR, and that this is checked regularly in case their status changes or they are removed from the register.

The FPA wants to raise awareness so that as employers you understand the standards that are expected of PAs. To underpin quality assurance and patient safety, the FPA strongly recommends that employers only

¹ NHS Improvement. *Developing workforce safeguards*. NHSI, 2018. Available online at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Developing-workforce-safeguards.pdf>

recruit qualified PAs who have met all requirements of their profession to work as a PA and are registered on the PAMVR.

You can check an individual PA's registration by visiting the FPA website. PAs not registered with the FPA or those who have not completed all requirements to qualify and work as a PA or be called a PA within their job role should be flagged and raised locally by the employer and, where necessary, escalated to national level with the relevant statutory bodies.

We would like to highlight that once the GMC introduce statutory regulation for PAs, individuals working as physician associates within the UK will need to gain GMC registration within 2 years of the GMC register opening. After which time, if they are not registered as a PA with the GMC, they must cease practising as a PA.

Please contact FPA@rcp.ac.uk for any further information or guidance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Saunders', written in a cursive style.

Jamie Saunders
President, Faculty of Physician Associates