



Fast 15: PA-C's in Puerto Rico



**How Asociados Médicos Can
Relieve Healthcare Shortages
in Uncharted Territory**



Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this session, participants should be able to:

1. Summarize the unique healthcare and reimbursement **infrastructure** in Puerto Rico
2. Identify specific health **disparities** in Puerto Rico and the impact on individuals and communities
3. Explain the current status of PAs in Puerto Rico and the **legislative** changes needed to implement practice
4. Describe the PA program at San Juan Bautista and goals to train and **educate** native Puerto Ricans
5. Demonstrate the current status of PA-Cs in Puerto Rico, describe what groundbreaking educational opportunities have commenced, outline the legislative efforts to establish the accurate profession, and demonstrate how **Asociados Médicos** will expand access to healthcare to those most in need



Snap Shot of Puerto Rico



La Isla Del Encanto

- **Population: ~3.5 million US citizens**
- **Largest of the 5 US territories**
 - Colony status (no congress vote)
- **Tribulations are multifold**
 - Natural disasters
 - Failing power grid (El Apágon)
 - Political turnover
- **Exodus of physicians**
 - Per AAMC <10,000 active physicians¹
 - 3,000 doctors left between 2012 –2017²
 - an estimated 400 continue to leave each year²
- **Epidemiologic transition in age of population³**
 - 18% of Puerto Rican citizens are over age 65
 - increased burden of chronic disease



From Twitter: @OscarTorressII

¡Bienvenida a la clase de Español!








When you want to introduce yourself in Spanish to patients you will say:

Hola Me Llamo ...[Insert Name]... Yo Soy Asociado Médico^{2,3}

You do not have to change to the feminine "a"/masculine "o" because *Asociado Médico* is considered a *proper noun*

Asociado Médico has been the AAPA endorsed title since 1998

Medicaid in the States vs Puerto Rico^{2,3,4,5}

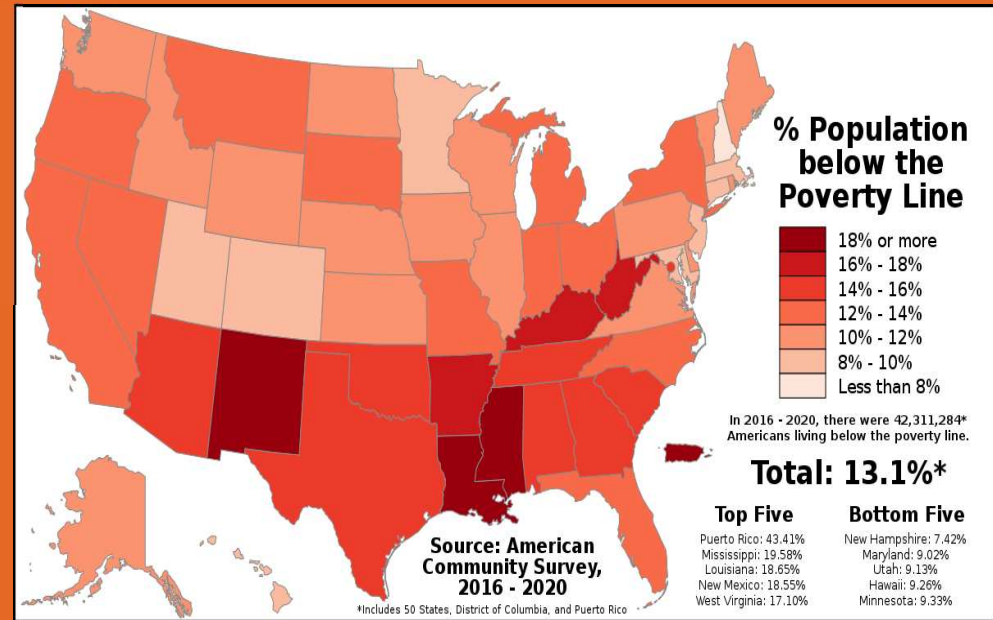
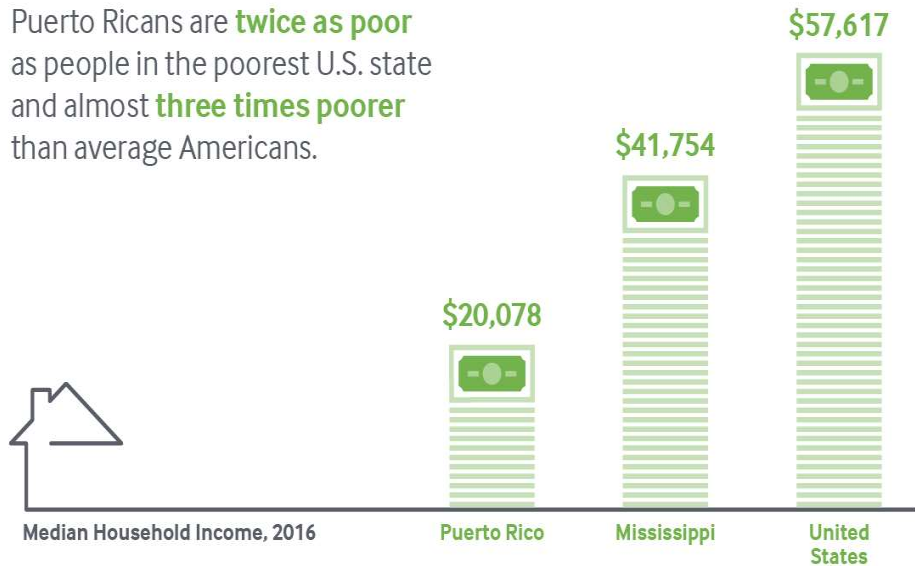
50 States + DC	Puerto Rico
Federal funding based on the state's per capita income	Fixed sum for <i>Medicaid</i> annually Capped sum for <i>Medicare</i> annually  coverage from private insurers
Federal funding will cover between 50%-83% of Medicaid costs for each individual state based off of the state's per capita income  	In 2010, it was estimated federal funding only covered 18% of the island's Medicaid spending. In monetary terms, Puerto Rico usually acquires <\$400 million in federal funding per fiscal year, which leaves the island dependent to pay for the remaining \$2.5 billion in Medicaid costs
It is estimated that healthcare costs contribute \$25 billion to Puerto Rico's \$72 billion total debt  	

Health Disparities⁶



- Higher poverty rate
- Lower enrollment/Lower eligibility
- High concentration of healthcare in San Juan metropolitan area
- Physician shortage

Puerto Ricans are **twice as poor** as people in the poorest U.S. state and almost **three times poorer** than average Americans.



As of 2020 ~38% of Puerto Ricans were uninsured⁶



Health Disparities



Challenges in Delivery of Primary vs Specialty Care

Primary Care⁷

- Many of the primary care providers on the island are reaching the age of retirement
- Puerto Rico has the lowest retention rate of new family medicine physicians in the nation



From Twitter: @MillyMendezpr

Specialty Care^{1,8,9}

- ❖ Median wait time between arrival and hospital admission is 13 hrs
- ❖ 6-12 months to see a pediatric neurologist
- ❖ 2-3 years to see a genetic specialist
- ❖ Specialties with <20 providers
 - Interventional Cardiology
 - Allergy/Immunology
 - Thoracic Surgery



A Timeline: PA's in Puerto Rico

Establishing PAs in Puerto Rico has been a decades long effort
 Many changes in the last 5 years



Ley 71	Apply	Students	License	Chapter	Summit
2017	2019	2021	2021	2021	2022
August 5th	February	January	First 3 PA-C's obtain Puerto Rico license	July	August
Allowing the practice of Médicos Asistentes/PA	La Junta begins accepting applications	First cohort of PA students at San Juan Bautista Caguas, PR		AAMPR becomes first AAPA constituent org	Partners in Healthcare for Puerto Rico San Juan, PR

What Does the Current Law Say?

La Ley No. 71

"Ley para Regular la Profesión de Médicos Asistentes de Puerto Rico" ¹⁰

1. Law No. 71 refers to PAs in Puerto Rico as "médicos asistentes." The initials "PA" can be used after their name.
2. Every "médico asistente" must have a supervising physician and this physician will need to sign off on all medical orders and notes.
3. PAs are not able to prescribe medications.
4. PAs are able to place medical orders, perform exams, and write progress notes.
5. A supervising physician may have no more than two PAs working under them but a PA may have more than one supervising physician.

Red Flags



médicos asistentes \neq Asociados Médicos

"Médicos asistentes" will not be an exclusive position solely for graduates of accredited PA programs.

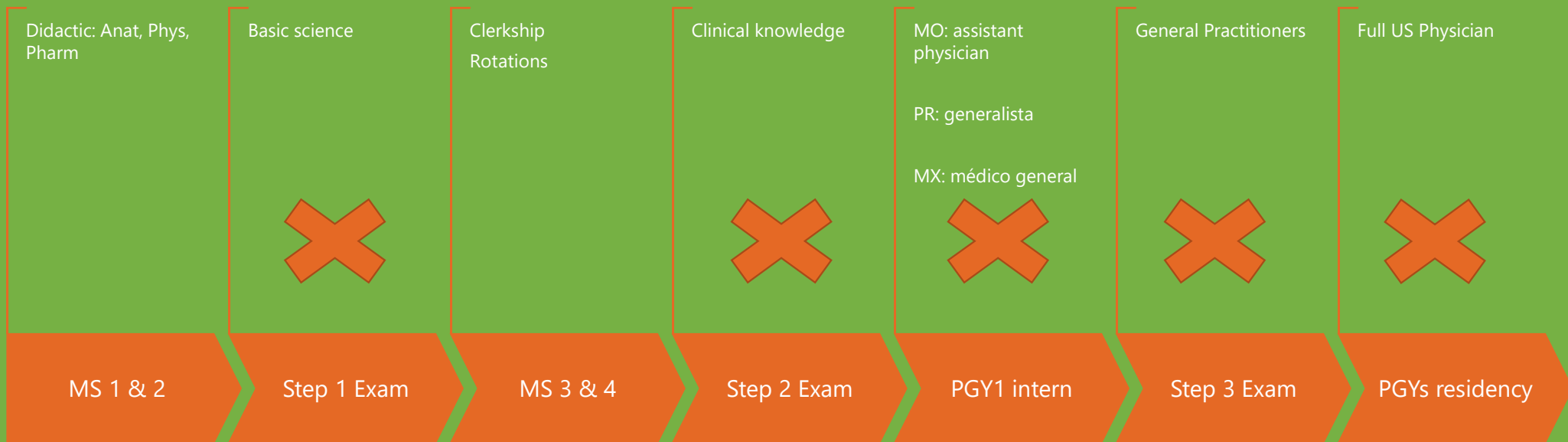
Other providers, though they are not graduates of accredited PA programs, can also use the initials "PA."



Who are médicos asistentes?

Who are médicos asistentes?

Levels of medical training and loopholes





First PA Students On the Island

San Juan Bautista School of Medicine
Caguas, PR



How do we meet this moment?

Call to Action

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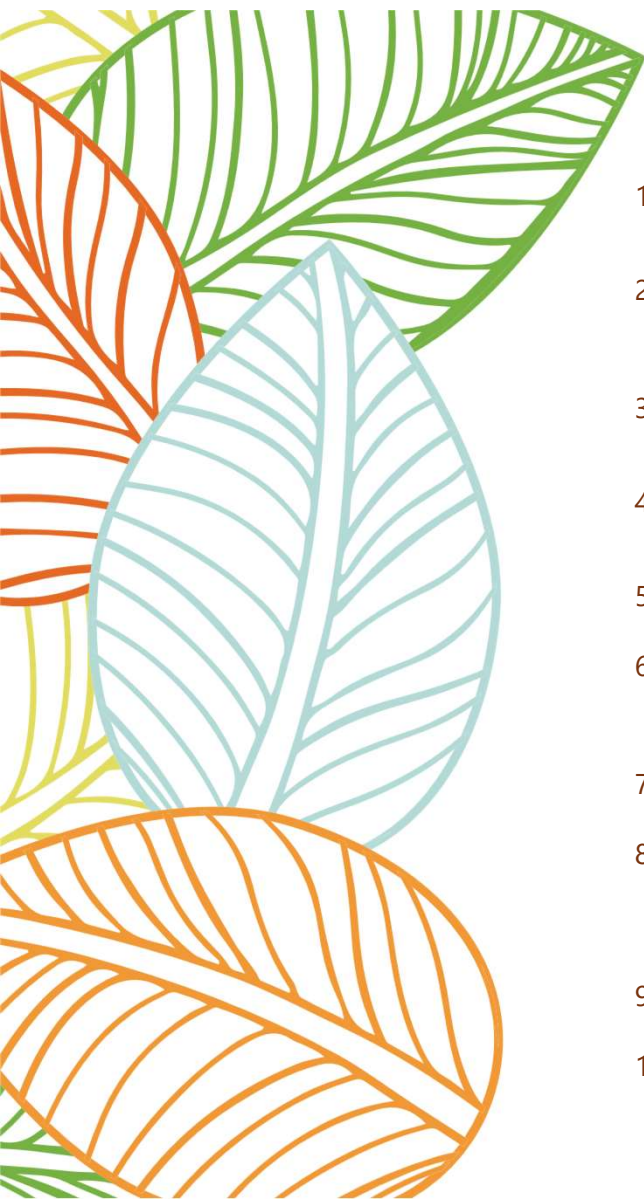
@AscoMedicoPR

Educate





Questions & Answers



Resources

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