

No conflicts of interest to disclose.

Background

Clinical onboarding programs have been shown to be highly effective for PAs and APRNs in both inpatient and outpatient settings to assess and strengthen professional competencies, serve as a source of professional development, and improve employee retention.^{1,2,3} After the completion of professional training, many PAs elect to work for non-academic healthcare settings. According to the American Academy of PAs (AAPA) 2021 Salary Survey only 39.6% of respondents worked for an academic medical center.⁴ For PAs that work for healthcare organizations outside of academia or without access to ongoing training and professional development programs, there exists barriers to developing resources for clinical onboarding. The AAPA Center for Healthcare Leadership and Management National Summary Report on PA and NP Workplace Experiences found that 56% of respondents chose a job based on being able to work at the top of their license but 65% did not receive any formal orientation.⁵

Results

In one year, 63 PAs/APRNs, of a variety of different incoming experience levels, participated in the program across 50 different clinical sites in 16 different specialties.

Post-program survey and quality improvement data demonstrated that COBATs can help identify gaps, train to these gaps and increase utilization of a PA's/NP's skills on the health care team.

Competency is the ability to display the knowledge, skills, and behavior necessary to be successful and efficient in a job role. When a new PA/APRN starts clinical practice there is a level of expertise that is expected, given their professional training. However, reaching and maintaining competency as a PA or APRN is not a singular event such as graduation or passing a certification examination. Competency changes based on clinical setting, specialty, and time removed from training.⁶

When developing an impactful clinical onboarding program, a focus on clinical competency is beneficial and can contribute to identification and subsequent improvement of a PA's or APRN's skills. Further, identifying knowledge gaps and maximizing competency can lead to top skill set utilization of a PA or APRN on their clinical teams. Therefore, our healthcare institution set out to examine if a clinical onboarding program measured on a competency-based scale could improve the utilization of our PAs' and NPs' skill sets on their clinical teams

See Figure 1 for pre-and post-program survey data and Table 1 for program feedback from the participants. Regardless of incoming experience level all PAs/APRN's rated at least one area at a level 3 or lower on their PKI. Identifying specific areas for the onboarding team to focus on during training.

Additionally, specialty-specific CBOATS and a competency-based

Methods

Specialty specific competency-based onboarding assessment tools (CBOATs) and a competency-based rating scale were developed for newly hired PAs and NPs and then provided to their onboarding team.

Surveys were conducted to compare pre- and post-onboarding program data on the how PAs' and APRNs' skills sets were being utilized on their healthcare teams. A control group of clinics that had no exposure to the program was also surveyed. Additionally, quality improvement program data was collected to assess the value-add of the program to the newly hired apps and the onboarding team.

At the start of the PA/APRN employment they were sent a prior knowledge inventory (PKI) to gauge their incoming competency level. The results of the PKI will be shared with the practice administrators,

collaborating physicians, and other PAs and APRNs on the healthcare team. A total of two progress evaluations were completed by the PA/APRN and the collaborating physician to assess for growth. The PKI and progress evaluations were scored on a 4-point Likert scale with number scoring corresponding to entrustable professional activity (EPA) progression. An EPA scale was chosen for the onboarding program to assess the level of autonomy associated with each competency for newly hired PAs/APRNs.

Following completion of the onboarding program, a second PA/APRN utilization survey was sent to the practice administrators and physicians to determine if those who underwent the onboarding program had different utilization of PA/APRN skills set as compared to clinics that did not.

References

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Skill Set Utilization Results

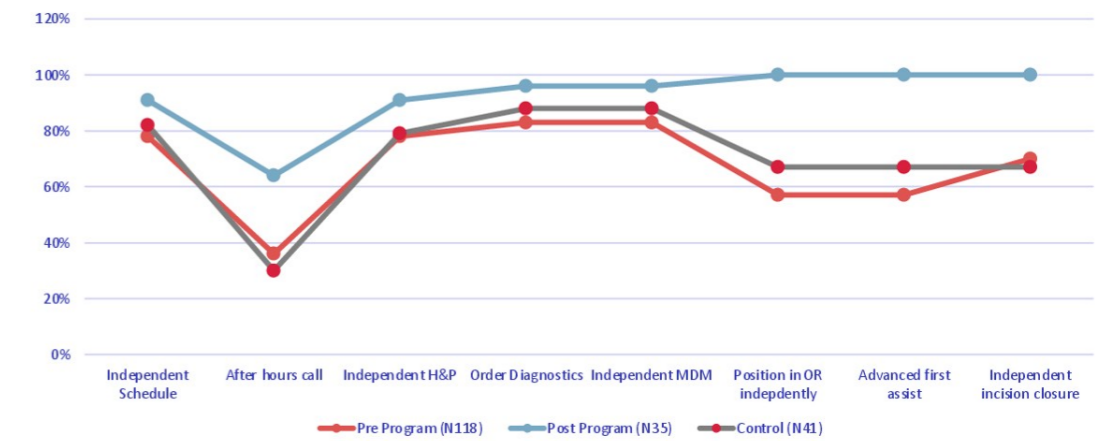


TABLE 1: Onboarding Program Feedback

Question	New Hire (N 13)	Onboarding Team (N18)
Psychological Safety: Did you feel comfortable discussing concerns or issues with your mentor? Including feeling free from judgment to ask questions?	100%	-
Role clarity and utilization of skill set: Do you have a clear idea of your role in the medical practice and what will be expected of you as an APP? Does participating in the onboarding program increase your knowledge of ways the APP can be utilized on the healthcare team?	100%	61%
Patient Safety: After completing this program, do you feel like a safer provider in regards to your delivery of care and knowledge? Do you feel that participation of new hires in the onboarding program increases patient safety?	92%	100%

TABLE 2: Competency-Based Evaluation Scale

Competency level	Level Descriptor
1	Provider does not have the knowledge and skills to manage this category of patients or specific skill.
2	Provider has background knowledge but requires <u>significant support</u> with the execution of this patient issue or skill.
3	Provider has solid knowledge and skills and requires some <u>moderate support</u> with the execution of this patient issue or skill.
4	Provider has excellent knowledge and skills to safely manage this patient issue <u>independently or with minimal support</u> .

Toolbox for Creating CBOATs

- Research existing core competencies examples (NCCPA/AANC)
- Compile list of needed competencies and have PAs/APRNs in the specialty review
- Used a standard competency-based scale that promotes top of scope practice
- Create electronic form to simplify process for providers and receive quicker feedback
- Provide results to the entire onboarding team
- Gather feedback, revise, and refine