

Is it Time to Hire an Advanced Practitioner for your Practice?

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Objectives for Discussion

- Understand the roles and responsibilities of an Advanced Practitioner in an allergy practice.
- Identify effective strategies for recruiting, hiring, and training advanced practitioners.
- Describe the ways an advanced practitioner can contribute to practice efficiency and patient satisfaction.

When is it time to hire an Advanced Practitioner (AP)?

1. When the physician schedule is full and desires to expand capacity
2. To get help with call, covering vacation/absences, and supervising immunotherapy
3. Schedule availability for sick visits, work-ins, and testing (challenges, skin testing, pulmonary testing)
4. Help with documentation, scribing, phone messages, appeals, signing prior authorizations
5. When the practice is able to absorb the expense of recruiting, training, and building a patient base for an advanced practitioner

What are the different types of Advanced Practitioners?

- Nurse Practitioner (NP-C or APRN-BC)
 - State Board of Nursing Licensure (RN and APRN)
 - Nationally Board Certified by the AANP or ANCC
 - Fulfill CME requirements of the state license
 - Renew certification every 10 years with CME/practice
- Physician Assistant (PA-C)
 - State specific Licensure to practice
 - Nationally Board Certified by PANCE
 - Complete a recertification exam every 10 years
 - Complete 100 hours of CME every 2 years

What are the roles and scope of practice of an Advanced Practitioner (AP)?

- APs evaluate, examine, diagnose, prescribe, order, and interpret diagnostic testing to bring a collaborative approach to medical care
- APs can function autonomously with physician oversight of records (according to practice agreements and state requirements)
- NPs have a nursing approach which emphasizes health promotion and wellness of the whole person. Disease prevention, health education, and counseling are often focuses.
- PAs have a team approach from a general medicine education

What qualities do you look for in an Advanced Practitioner?

- Able to collaborate and adapt to the physician's style of medicine
- Someone who shares the physician's philosophy on medicine
- Able to spend time with patients and explain things well with good communication skills
- Someone who shares the physician's world view
- Someone who fits well in the practice culture

How do you train an allergy Advanced Practitioner?

- Train them like an allergy fellow:
 - Talk about the basics of immunology
 - Teach allergic rhinitis, asthma, atopic dermatitis, and anaphylaxis
 - Food allergies, urticaria/angioedema, and immunodeficiencies tend to be the hardest subjects
- At CAC, NPs spend training time in the shot room and with the clinical staff to understand the flow of the patient experience, decision making, and treatment plan. Our NPs can administer all tests and handle office visits alone.

What are different ways to integrate an Advanced Practitioner in your practice?

- Follow each physician to understand their style of medicine and how they handle different cases.
- Initially, see all the new patients with the physician
- Then, start adding routine office visits
- Dr. Soong has ½ day where they both see new patients only.
- Help with allergy procedures
- Help with patient calls and messages
- APs call/discuss all difficult patients with physician
- Assist staff with appeals, notes for work/school, authorizations, applications for treatments

What are some other schedule examples?

- At Chattanooga Allergy Clinic, the Nurse Practitioners see their own schedule independently of the physicians. Every provider rotates to multiple satellite locations.
- The patients choose who they want to see based on their personal preference, their schedule, and availability at each location.
- The NPs handle most of the work-in, sick, and short-notice testing procedures that are done.
- Each physician sees their own patients, but the NPs see all patients (regardless of assigned physician).

What types of schedules do Advanced Practitioners have?

- At CAC, the NPs see patients every 15 minutes from 8:30-11 & 1:30-4. We also have variations for late hours and early morning one day a week.
- The NPs cover Saturday am immunotherapy supervision at one location
- At Alabama Allergy, the NPs see patients every 30 minutes
- With an EMR, additional time may be needed for data entry

What are some of the pitfalls seen with an Advanced Practitioner?

- APs may need at least 6-12 months to be fully comfortable with decision making
- The practice needs to communicate and explain to patients that they work as a team. The staff needs to promote the team approach.
- The providers need to have a plan on how to handle difficult cases and when to seek physician input/help with treatment decisions
- EMR can result in documentation burn out. Physicians and APs may work after hours charting.

Additional pitfalls...

- Patients may feel a connection to the AP and want to see them more regularly than the physician. There needs to be a general guideline of what is an acceptable time period between physician visits.
- There needs to be clear communication of what the AP will be expected to handle day to day in collaboration with the physician (i.e. lab results, signing off on prescriptions called in or triage nurse notes, dictations/notes from other providers being added to the chart).

What are some of the regulatory considerations with having an Advanced Practitioner?



What are the insurance and coding issues when billing for an Advanced Practitioner?

- Insurance verification and credentialing
- Bill "incident to"
- When seeing Medicare patients, APs must have their own Medicare # and receive 85% of allowable charges
- Insurance contracts must be negotiated for each provider with credentialing
- In some states, APs are not authorized to order certain radiology tests or home health
