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The physician assistant in The Netherlands

The Physician Assistant is a healthcare professional licensed to practice medicine across all medical specialties. Introduced into the Dutch Healthcare System in 2003, he or she is trained to medically diagnose a broad range of conditions, order diagnostic tests, execute medical procedures and prescribe medicine.

The reasons why PAs were considered for The Netherlands are:

- A growing demand for healthcare due in large part to a growing number of patients and the rise in
- Co-morbidity
- An aging population
- Decreasing number of postgraduate physicians in training Increasing patient expectations
- Emerging technologies and treatment opportunities

As the Dutch PA movement grew the government introduced various policies to enhance their development. Today the PA has full practice authority, is regulated by law, and answers to the same medical discipline-board as physicians. Insurance companies reimburse PA roles and activities to the hospital

employer. In 2018 there were 1200 graduate PAs working clinically. Applicant requirements include a bachelor's degree in healthcare, at least two years of experience with direct patient care, and an employment contract as a student with a healthcare institution. Enrollment in 2019 is 250 students in five universities and growth is anticipated. Various studies have consistently shown that the quality of PAs compares favorably with physicians. Patient satisfaction is high; the quality of medical treatment is the same, including prescribing, and the care meets the requirements of safety and cost effectiveness. Clinically active PAs are satisfied with their role and place in society. As the supply of PAs grows the Dutch healthcare system will need to assess how their utilization can be further enhanced.

Speaker Biography

Geert van den Brink is director of the PA education program at the HAN University of applied sciences. He has been involved with the development of the PA since 2002. He completed his MSc in Health sciences at the University Maastricht in 2001. Since 2006 he has chaired the national board of Nurse Practitioner and Physician Assistants in the Netherlands. He is completing his doctoral degree evaluating the employment economics of Nurse Practitioners and the Physician Assistants in the Netherlands.

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