

Physician Assistants and IPAs

Federal Trade Commission and Department of Justice
Hearings on Health Care and Competition Law and Policy

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Definition of PAs

Physician Assistants (PAs) are licensed health professionals who

- Practice medicine with physician supervision
- Exercise autonomy in medical decision making
- Provide a broad range of diagnostic and therapeutic services
- May also perform educational, research, and administrative activities

PA's Practice Medicine

- **Perform physical exams and take patient histories**
- **Diagnose and treat illnesses**
- **Order and interpret laboratory tests**
- **Assist in surgery**
- **Write prescriptions (in 47 states and D.C.)**
- **Provide patient education and counseling**

Community Need

The geographic distribution of PAs more evenly matches the population than other primary care providers.

*Seventh Report to the President
and Congress on the Status of Health
Personnel in the United States —
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*

PA Education

- **Averages 26 months**
 - Competency-based rather than degree-based
- **First 9 to 12 months in classroom:**
 - Anatomy
 - Biochemistry
 - Microbiology
 - Pathophysiology
 - Pharmacology
 - Physical Diagnosis

PA Education

- **Second 12 to 15 months in rotations (more than 2,000 hours of clinical instruction)**
 - Family Practice
 - Emergency Medicine
 - Internal Medicine
 - Obstetrics and Gynecology
 - Pediatrics
 - Psychiatry
 - Surgery

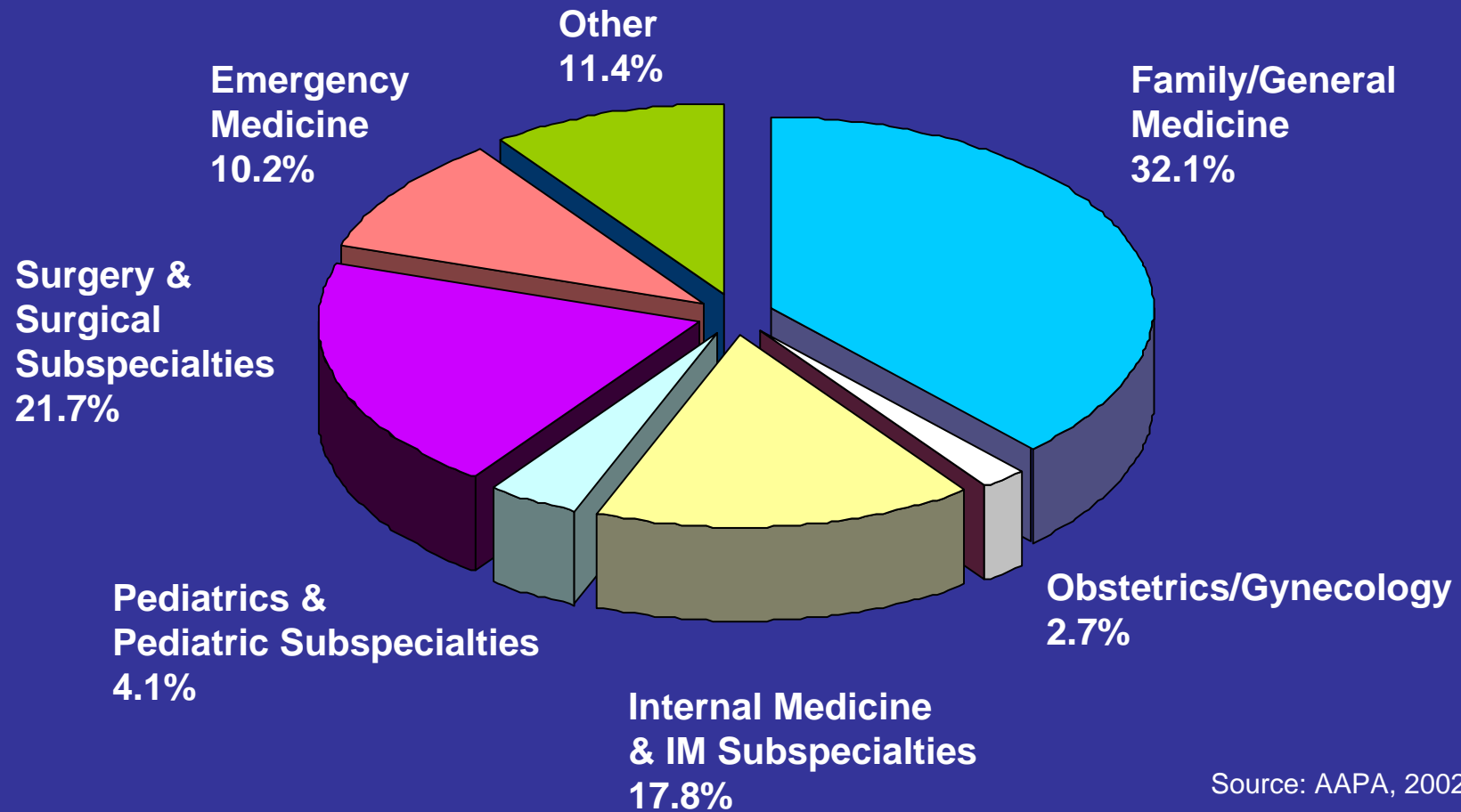
PA Certification

- **States require national certification for licensure**
- **To obtain certification, a PA**
 - Must be a graduate of an accredited PA program
 - Must pass the national exam administered by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA)

PA Certification

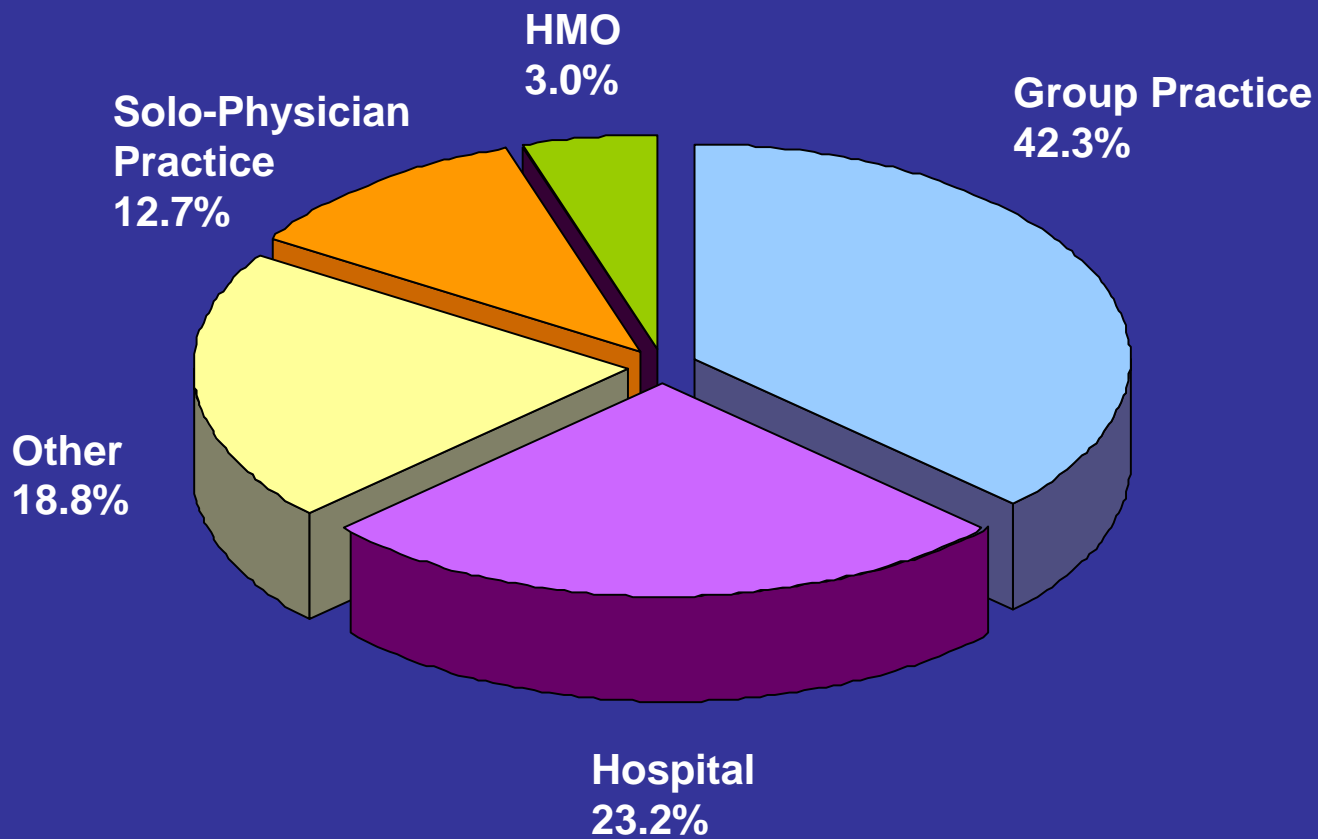
- **To maintain national certification, a PA**
 - Must log 100 hours of continuing medical education (CME) every 2 years
 - Must sit for recertification exam every 6 years
 - Only health care profession to require recertification by exam every 6 years

PAs by Specialty



Source: AAPA, 2002 Census

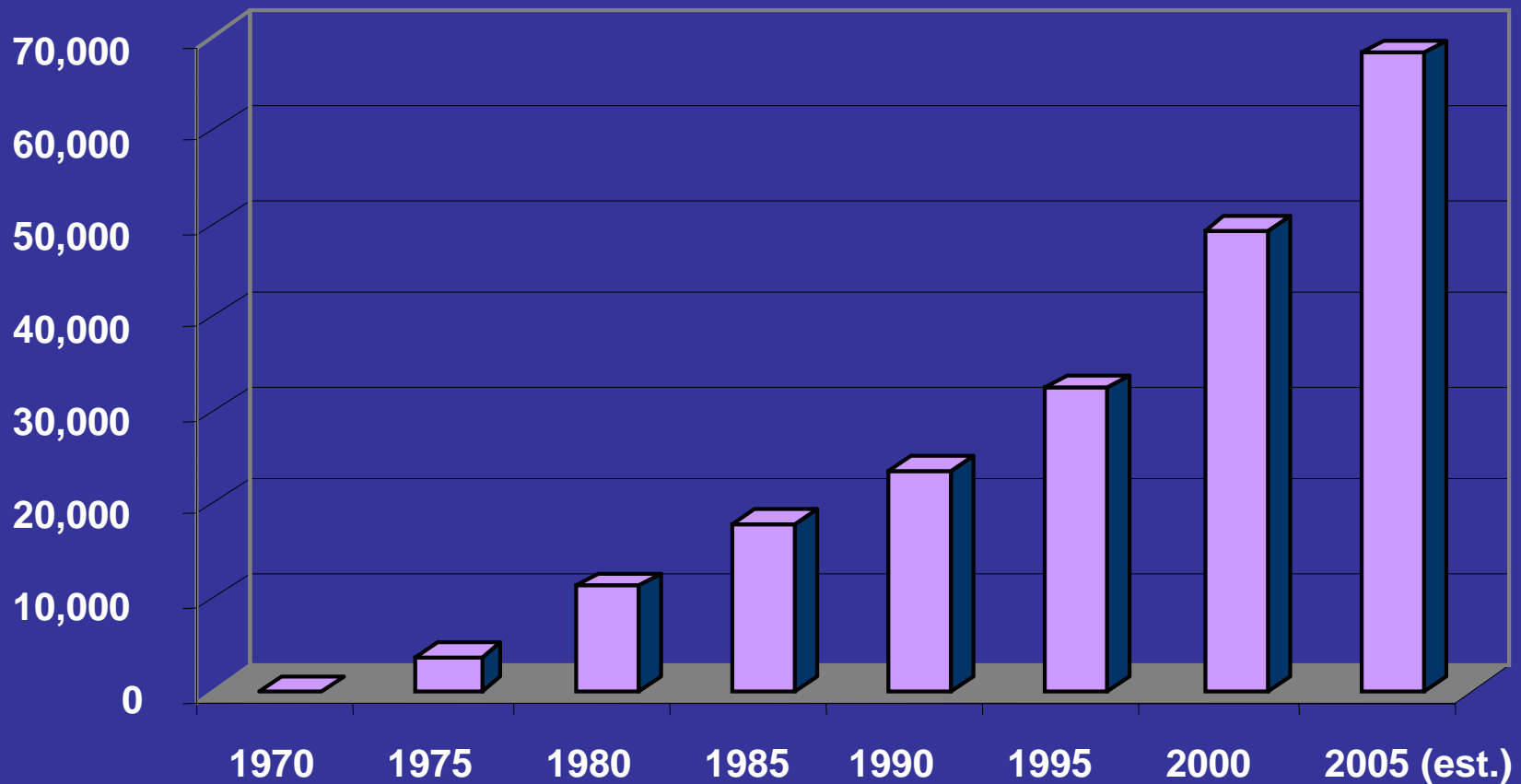
PA Employers



Source: AAPA, 2002 Census

Growth of the PA Profession

(number of people eligible to practice as PAs)



Source: AAPA, 2002

What if . . .

- The supervising physician's main practice site is several miles from the site where the PA practices (common in rural areas)
- PA and supervising physician have different specialties
- PA works in more than one specialty (common with part-time jobs or "moonlighting")

Questions, questions, questions

- What is the PA's duty to the supervising physician vs. IPA vs. employer vs. patient?
- Who/what determines a PA's legal standing in an IPA
- Does a physician or practice that employs several PAs have an effect on anti-trust, even if the PAs aren't IPA members? What if they are IPA members?