PAs Taking the Modern Medical Practice by Storm

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The PA profession has seen tremendous growth in the last six years. There are multiple reasons for its increased popularity.

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Welcome to the latest edition of the Physicians Practice Pearls Podcast. In this podcast, we'll bring you some of the most interesting and influential guests in healthcare. If you have any ideas for podcast guests or topics, email us at editor@physicianspractice.com.

Every year the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA) releases data on the physician assistant (PA) profession. This year's data reveals the profession is growing by leaps and bounds. In 2010, there were just over 80,000 certified PAs nationwide. In 2016, the number has grown to just over 115,500 certified PAs.

If the NCCPA's data is any indication, many of these PAs are young women. In fact, the NCCPA found that 28 percent of certified PAs are women aged 30-39, and 14.2 percent are young women aged 20-29. Dawn Morton-Rias, PA-C, told the Physicians Practice Pearls podcast being a PA provides young women a certain flexibility that being a physician cannot.

"For women, this profession is very appealing because it provides flexibility and the freedom to select the type of environment and working conditions that you want and need, depending on your personal preferences and family/life balance," said Morton-Rias, who notes it's not just women. "Young [PA] graduates, both male and female, often select disciplines that are very demanding, requiring 12-14-hour days. As their lifestyle changes and they settle down and have families...they have the freedom to move across disciplines to those that are more conducive to a [good] work-life balance."

Another reason for the growth of the PA profession, Morton-Rias said, is its ability to ensure a more efficient patient flow in the medical practice. She said if there are 50 patients in a busy waiting room, PAs can address 70-80 percent of the needs of that patient population, freeing up the physician to provide other services.

Morton-Rias talks about other reasons for the growth of the PA profession, why it's the ideal career choice for a young person, and much more.

Click to play the podcast above for the complete interview.