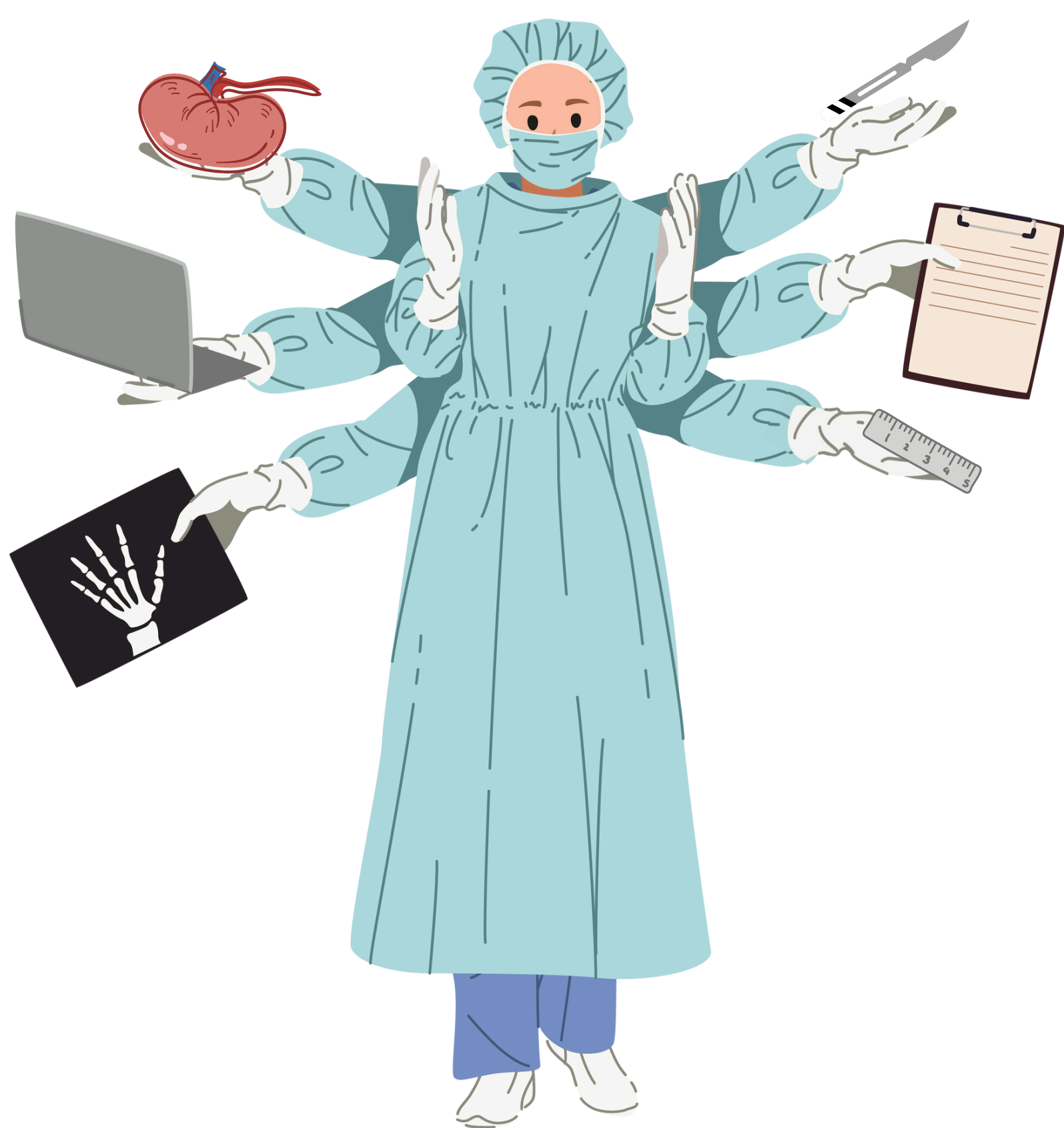


WHAT IS A PATHOLOGISTS' ASSISTANT



A Pathologists' Assistant is a certified allied health professional, qualified to support anatomic pathology services under the supervision of an anatomic pathologist. Analogous to PAs, they function as dependent practitioners with anatomic pathologists, processing and conducting macroscopic examinations of surgical and postmortem specimens while assisting with provisional diagnoses, clinical histories, and anatomical findings.



KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Conduct comprehensive macroscopic evaluations and submit tissue sections for microscopic examination
- Review prior histories, imaging and lab results
- Manage and oversee surgical pathology and anatomic pathology services.
- Perform post-mortem exams
- Maintain regulatory compliance, quality improvement, safety and management activities of the lab
- Educate and train pathology residents and PA students as well as hospital staff on best pathology practices

CREDENTIALS

PA(ASCP)

EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- Graduate from a NAACLS-accredited Pathologists' Assistant training program or on-the-job training for those grandfathered in and trained prior to 2010.
- Passage of the ASCP BOC Pathologists' Assistant Certification Examination
- Completion 60 continuing education credits every three years to maintain certification



The importance of **QUALIFIED PATHOLOGISTS' ASSISTANTS**

Gross examination provides essential information about a specimen for accurate diagnosis, which drives the management plans used by clinicians to treat patients. PAs are trained to accurately describe specimens and select key sections for microscopic analysis, ensuring critical findings are not overlooked.

Accurate Diagnosis

Delayed disease identification or missed findings by untrained personnel can lead to postponed treatment and worsened prognosis. Inaccurate diagnoses result in unnecessary surgeries and tests, increasing patient distress and hospital costs.



Treatment Guidance

Pathology drives the management plans used by clinicians to treat patients. PAs provide meticulous examination and sampling to improve cancer management outcomes, evaluate treatment efficacy and ensure thorough disease assessment.



Adequate Specimen Processing

High-quality tissue sections are crucial for accurate diagnosis. Qualified PAs use techniques to minimize tissue damage for clearer diagnostics and prevent the loss of critical diagnostic information.



Thorough Documentation

PAs document specimens with clear descriptions and a solid understanding of clinical procedures and terminology, enhancing communication between pathologists and clinicians. Thorough documentation is essential for effective diagnoses, improved patient management, and legal protection.



**The Direct
Impact
Pathologists'
Assistants
Have on
Patient Care**

WHY LICENSURE?

ENSURED COMPETENCE

Licensing ensures safety and quality in laboratory practices by confirming that PAs are qualified and possess necessary skills. Since PAs now undertake responsibilities previously limited to pathologists, it's vital that only licensed professionals perform these duties.



IMPROVED RESULTS

Employing licensed laboratory professionals is critical for maintaining high testing standards and reducing error rates in lab results. Studies show that labs with licensed medical laboratory scientists had lower failure rates on proficiency tests compared to those hiring non-licensed personnel.

PUBLIC PROTECTION

PAs provide essential information that form the basis for medical diagnoses and treatment. Regulation of PAs is essential to ensure safety and quality in pathology, protecting patients from potential harm due to unqualified practices.



PROTECTION OF TITLES

Licensure protects the use of professional titles. Only licensed PAs can represent themselves as such, preventing uncertified individuals or grossing technicians from using the PA title, applying for jobs, or operating within the designated scope of practice.

ADVANCED RECOGNITION

Licensure enhances PAs' credibility by endorsing their skills and qualifications. It represents state approval, conferring legitimacy to their role as advanced practitioners who perform tasks typically done by physicians. Without licensure, it's difficult to communicate our status as highly trained medical professionals.



DEFINING SCOPE OF PRACTICE

Defining the scope of practice for PAs and other pathology roles is crucial for clear responsibilities, legal clarity, and enhanced collaboration in healthcare. Licensing clarifies roles and duties for PAs, pathologists, and grossing techs, facilitating teamwork by leveraging diverse skill sets.

Licensure will NOT...

1

...encroach on pathologists' scope of practice



- Per CLIA, CAP, and Joint Commission, only pathologists can diagnose and sign out anatomic pathology cases.
- PAs must work under the supervision of a qualified pathologist
- PAs perform technical work, not diagnostic tasks, and lack billing codes for tasks reserved for pathologists.
- Collaboration of PAs and pathologists crucial due to the pathologist shortage, maximizing the strengths of both

2

...hinder travel PAs



As more states implement licensing, the hope is for reciprocity among states. Travel agencies also often cover the costs, and applications are typically approved quickly, indicating that licensure does not deter travel professionals, as seen with the growing popularity of travel nursing despite similar requirements.

3

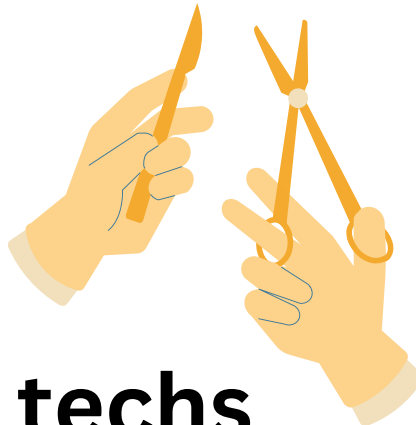
...obstruct OJT PAs

States implementing licensure for PAs usually include a grandfathering period to protect current practitioners. Legislation should clearly outline educational pathways for all practicing PAs.



4

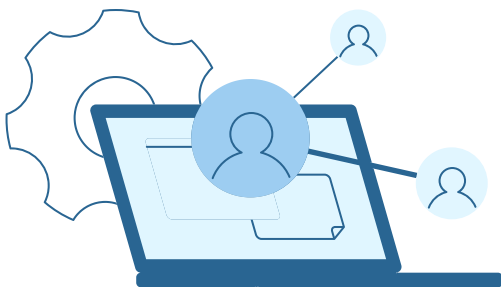
...eliminate grossing techs



- Grossing techs entering PA positions undermines job security
- Lower qualifications lead to reduced average salaries
- Confusion about the PA role diminishes visibility
- Lack of required education and licensure results in being overlooked for administrative positions
- Patients risk missed significant findings when tissues are handled by less qualified personnel

5

...impede hiring of PAs



- Streamlines hiring by standardizing job titles
- Attracts qualified candidates with uniform, law-protected job titles
- Establishes clear standards for PA scope of practice
- Centralizes credential verification, reducing fees and delays
- Increased demand and reliance on PAs for grossing due to pathologist shortage, allowing pathologists more time at the microscope.

6

...be just another added bureaucracy



Licensing will clearly define PA roles in grossing tasks. Grossing techs should have a separate "limited" license with restricted duties, distinct educational standards, and varying levels of grossing responsibility, as seen in New York's differentiation between PAs and histotechnicians to optimize skill utilization.