

2026 APP Summit: Elevating Advanced Practice



• The Digital Clinician

Presenter: Dipu Patel-DMSc, ABAIM, MPAS, PA-C - Vice Chair for Innovation, Professor, University of Pittsburgh

Upon completion of this activity, participants should be able to:

- Evaluate current and emerging AI/digital health tools relevant to clinical practice.
- Analyze how these tools influence clinical decision-making, workflow efficiency, documentation processes, and patient-provider relationships.
- Implement strategies to integrate these tools into clinical practice while maintaining empathy, ethical standards, and clinical excellence.

• Updates in Heart Transplant, VAD and Cardiogenic Shock

Presenter: Amanda Hopwood Brophy PA-C - APP Surgical Supervisor, UPMC Cardiac Transplant and LVAD Programs, UPMC Heart and Vascular Institute, UPMC Presbyterian Shadyside

Upon completion of this activity, participants should be able to:

Cardiogenic Shock case Studies

- Apply lessons learned from cardiogenic shock management to evaluate and guide clinical decision-making in similar patient scenarios.
- Demonstrate effective and accurate documentation practices when managing patients in cardiogenic shock.
- Integrate current evidence-based approaches to bloodless medicine into the care of VAD/transplant patients.

Updates in cardiac transplant/VAD/cardiogenic shock

- Assess the role and clinical utility of satellite VAD/transplant evaluation clinics in optimizing patient access and care coordination.
- Interpret UPMC cardiac transplant and VAD program outcomes to inform quality improvement and clinical practice.

• Theranostics

Presenter: Jacqueline Ligorski CRNP, MSN, FNP-BC, AGACNP-BC, AOCNP - Hematology Oncology Specialist, UPMC

Upon completion of this activity, participants should be able to:

- Describe the principles, evolution, and clinical significance of theranostics in modern medical practice.
- Differentiate the indications, mechanisms of action, administration processes, radiation-safety considerations, and patient-education needs for the three FDA-approved medications used in the treatment of Prostate Cancer and Neuroendocrine Tumors (NET).
- Apply key programmatic considerations—including workflow planning, radiation-safety procedures, and integration of clinical trial protocols—when implementing or managing a clinical theranostics program.

2026 APP Summit: Elevating Advanced Practice



• Precepting Tips and Tricks

Presenters:

Julie Dubis DMSc, MPAS, PA-C - Director of Simulation, Assistant Professor, Health Sciences, School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Pittsburgh

Hayden Mulligan MPAS, PA-C - Assistant Professor, Health Sciences, School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Pittsburgh

Upon completion of this activity, participants should be able to:

- Demonstrate the value of effective precepting by analyzing common barriers and selecting strategies to address them.
- Apply practical, time-efficient clinical teaching strategies to prepare and orient students, promote progressive learner growth, and deliver constructive, actionable feedback in real-world patient care settings.
- Implement approaches that support learner success and preceptor well-being by managing struggling learners effectively and utilizing available institutional preceptor support resources.

• From Surviving to Thriving: A Review of Post Intensive Care Syndrome (PICS)

Presenter: Katie Geary, MSN, FNP-C, RN, CRNP - Critical Illness Recovery Center, UPMC Mercy Health Center

Upon completion of this activity, participants should be able to:

- Analyze current trends in ICU survivorship to identify patterns that influence post-discharge outcomes.
- Define Post-Intensive Care Syndrome (PICS) and distinguish its core clinical features in critically ill patients.
- Evaluate the components and risk factors of PICS to determine patients at heightened risk for developing the syndrome.
- Implement evidence-based strategies to prevent PICS across the continuum of critical care.
- Describe the structure and function of Post-ICU clinics/Critical Illness Recovery Centers and assess their role in supporting ICU survivors.

• Little People, Big Support: Demystifying Pediatric Palliative Care

Presenter: Heather Valente, MSPAS, PA-C - Physician Assistant, Expert, Division of Palliative Medicine and Supportive Care, UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh

Upon completion of this activity, participants should be able to:

- Differentiate key components of pediatric palliative care and articulate its clinical importance in supporting patients and families.
- Identify and classify the four pediatric disease trajectories that warrant referral to pediatric palliative care.
- Assess the impact of pediatric palliative care on patients and their families and apply this understanding to guide clinical decision-making.

2026 APP Summit: Elevating Advanced Practice



• APP Life Without the Burn: Your Financial Freedom Roadmap

Presenter: Carrie McMahon, MHPE, MPAS, PA-C - Assistant Professor, Shenandoah University

Upon completion of this activity, participants should be able to:

- Distinguish professional burnout by recognizing its common signs and evaluating contributing factors in healthcare settings.
- Analyze how financial stress contributes to burnout among APPs and assess its impact on professional well-being and performance.
- Implement effective financial strategies—including budgeting, debt elimination, and investing—to reduce money-related stress and support personal resilience.

• Opioid Use and the Gut-Brain Axis

Presenter: Ireland O'Brien, MPH, PA-S2 – Senior Patient Care Technician, UPMC Passavant, Master of Physician Assistant Studies - Student

Upon completion of this activity, participants should be able to:

- Define opioid use disorder by describing its diagnostic features, illustrate the neurobiology underlying opioid use, and assess clinical indicators of opioid withdrawal and tolerance.
- Explain the basic function of the gut-brain axis and analyze how opioid use alters gut microbiome interactions.
- Evaluate the clinical implications of disruptions to the gut microbiome and illustrate their potential physiologic and behavioral effects.

• Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome

Presenters:

Elise Fullerton CRNP-BC – Nurse Practitioner, Senior, Pulmonology, UPMC

Lindsay Busch PA-C - Physician Assistant, Expert, Pulmonology, UPMC

Upon completion of this activity, participants should be able to:

- Differentiate Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS) using the Berlin Criteria to accurately identify qualifying diagnostic features.
- Identify direct and indirect precipitating factors of ARDS to support timely clinical recognition.
- Distinguish the phases and severity classifications of ARDS to guide appropriate diagnostic and therapeutic decision-making.
- Interpret characteristic imaging findings associated with ARDS to improve diagnostic accuracy.
- Analyze arterial blood gases (ABGs) and ventilator parameters to optimize ventilator management strategies for ARDS patients.

2026 APP Summit: Elevating Advanced Practice



- Describe the physiologic mechanisms underlying prone positioning to justify its use in appropriate clinical scenarios.
- Evaluate fluid status and volume management strategies to effectively support hemodynamic stability in ARDS.
- Explain the therapeutic role of corticosteroids in ARDS and apply evidence-supported steroid regimens when clinically indicated.
- Implement current evidence-based recommendations for ventilatory and medical management to enhance outcomes in patients with ARDS.

• Inpatient Hyperglycemia and Diabetic Ketoacidosis Management

Presenter: Paige Thompson, PA-C – UPMC Center for Diabetes and Endocrinology, UPMC Passavant

Upon completion of this activity, participants should be able to:

- Explain the clinical significance of inpatient hyperglycemia and its impact on patient outcomes.
- Apply evidence-based principles of insulin management to optimize hyperglycemia treatment in hospitalized patients.
- Identify patient- and system-level factors that influence the development or worsening of inpatient hyperglycemia.
- Implement appropriate perioperative diabetes management strategies to reduce glycemic complications around surgical procedures.
- Manage Type 1 Diabetes safely and effectively in the hospital setting, including adjustments to basal–bolus therapy and monitoring.
- Diagnose and treat diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA) in accordance with current inpatient protocols and clinical guidelines.

• Child Maltreatment

Presenter: Rachel Speaker, CRNP, FNP-C, Child Advocacy Center, Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh

Upon completion of this activity, participants should be able to:

- Identify injury patterns that indicate a high concern for physical child abuse.
- Differentiate presenting symptoms that raise suspicion for abusive head trauma in infants.
- Describe the essential components required to complete an effective ChildLine report.

• *Clostridioides difficile* Diagnostic Criteria Stewardship

Presenter: Jessica L. Spragg, DNP-CRNP – Hospital Medicine, UPMC Passavant

Upon completion of this activity, participants should be able to:

- Differentiate the microbiology and epidemiology of *Clostridioides difficile* infection (CDI) to support accurate clinical assessment and prevention strategies.

2026 APP Summit: Elevating Advanced Practice



- Distinguish active CDI from asymptomatic colonization using clinical, laboratory, and epidemiologic indicators.
- Compare hospital-acquired CDI (HA-CDI) and community-acquired CDI (CA-CDI) to guide appropriate diagnostic and reporting pathways.
- Implement evidence-based infection prevention practices to reduce transmission and ensure appropriate reporting of CDI according to institutional and public health standards.

- **These are the breaks: Approach to Pediatric Fractures from a Metabolic Bone Standpoint**

Presenter: Christa Ward MPAS, PA-C - Pediatric Endocrinology, University of Strong Medical Center, Rochester, NY

Upon completion of this activity, participants should be able to:

- Differentiate pediatric osteoporosis from other causes of low bone density to support accurate clinical characterization.
- Implement an evidence-based diagnostic work-up for a child presenting with multiple fractures.
- Coordinate timely referral of children with confirmed or suspected pediatric osteoporosis to the appropriate subspecialists.

- **Radiation Therapy Beyond Cancer: Applications to Benign Conditions with a focus on Osteoarthritis**

Presenter: Christen Cawley, MPAS, PA-C - Physician Assistant, Radiation Oncology, Hillman Cancer Center, UPMC Passavant

Upon completion of this activity, participants should be able to:

- Analyze the key components of the inflammatory process to improve clinical decision-making.
- Explain the rationale and mechanisms underlying the use of radiation therapy in benign disorders.
- Evaluate the current evidence supporting the use of low-dose radiation therapy (LDRT) in osteoarthritis.
- Apply risk assessment, recognize limitations, and determine appropriate patient selection for benign radiation therapy.

- **Transfusion Parameters**

Presenter: Brian G. Cenci, MSN, CRNP - Expert, FNP-C, AOCNP – UPMC Passavant

Upon completion of this activity, participants should be able to:

- Apply evidence-based criteria to determine when red blood cell transfusion is clinically indicated.
- Implement a single-unit red blood cell transfusion strategy to effectively conserve blood product utilization.
- Recognize signs and symptoms of common transfusion reactions during and after blood product administration.

2026 APP Summit: Elevating Advanced Practice



• Hospital Quality and the APP

Presenter: Jamie DeAngelis, MSN, CRNP - Improvement Specialist, Intermediate UPMC Quality, Health Services Division

Upon completion of this activity, participants should be able to:

- Apply UPMC's system-wide quality initiatives to evaluate and guide hospital performance.
- Describe the purpose and operational role of Quality Oversight Improvement (QOI) teams in supporting organizational quality goals.
- Demonstrate effective provider documentation practices that support accurate coding, appropriate risk adjustment, and improved patient-care metrics.

• Gaining Stakeholder Buy-In & Perfecting a Pitch - *From Idea to Approval*

Presenter: Amy L. Haller, MBA, MPAS, PA-C - Vice Chair for Professional Development and Continuing Education, Department of PA Studies, University of Pittsburgh

Upon completion of this activity, participants should be able to:

- Analyze key stakeholders and prioritize their interests to inform message strategy.
- Construct a concise and compelling pitch that clearly communicates value and intended outcomes.
- Anticipate potential objections and formulate effective, evidence-based responses.
- Demonstrate confident, professional communication when engaging decision-makers.
- Adapt messaging to meet the needs of both executive and clinical audiences, ensuring clarity and relevance.

• Childhood Lead Poisoning and the Importance of Prevention and Testing

Presenter: Andi Fair, CRNP - Children's Express Care, Erie

Upon completion of this activity, participants should be able to:

- Analyze short- and long-term consequences of childhood lead poisoning to guide clinical decision-making
- Evaluate common sources of lead exposure and deliver anticipatory guidance to families to reduce risk.
- Integrate evidence-based strategies for preventing childhood lead poisoning into their clinical practice.