

WASHINGTON STATE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Resolution: (---)
(---)

Subject: Refer to All Medical Professionals by Their Titles

Introduced by: Susan J. Baumgaertel, MD FACP, Delegate

Referred to:

1 WHEREAS, in modern healthcare settings, there is widespread acceptance of the term 'provider' to
2 describe most types of people working in various specialties in the workplace, and
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4 WHEREAS, Washington State defines in RCW [48.41.030](#) a health care provider as: "any physician, facility,
5 or health care professional, who is licensed in Washington state and entitled to reimbursement for
6 health care services."

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8 WHEREAS, this definition provides a wide array of health care specialties to claim the same title of
9 'healthcare provider,' eroding the specificity in the qualifications and level of training for a wide variety
10 of persons engaged in providing care and thus leading to misunderstanding and potentially misguided
11 decisions from outside groups such as patients or the general public; and
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13 WHEREAS, the term *professional appropriation* is a term used to describe an unjust championing of
14 prestige or rank in the workplace, with the specific definition stating:
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16 "in medicine, [it] is the usurpation and perpetration of perceived ideas, symbols, behaviors,
17 roles, practices, etc. by a separate and distinct OTHER discipline to gain acceptance, prestige,
18 respect and/or acknowledgment for actions promoted as medical accomplishments, when those
19 'accomplishments' have not actually been appropriately earned."¹
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21 WHEREAS, this definition can directly relate to the use of the term provider as it allows for a differing
22 perception of the rank and role of specific medical groups in the eyes of the general public, who do not
23 have the knowledge of the differences in qualifications necessary to gain specific titles; and
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25 WHEREAS, there have been multiple public statements made by organizations such as the American
26 Medical Association (AMA), which has come out with reports in 2009 and 2019 that have:
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28 1. Affirmed that the term physician should be limited to those people that have a Doctor of
29 Medicine degree or recognized equivalent physician degree

¹ <https://authenticmedicine.com/2019/12/professional-appropriation-a-new-term/>

- 30 2. Urged all physicians to insist on being identified as a physician, to sign only those professional or
31 medical documents identifying them as physicians, and to not let the term physician be used by
32 any other organization or person involved in health care.
- 33 3. Advocated that all references to physicians by government, payers, and other health care
34 entities involving contracts, advertising, agreements, published descriptions, and other
35 communications at all times distinguish between physician, as defined above, and non-
36 physicians and to discontinue the use of the term provider.²
- 37 4. Supported requiring that health care entities, when using the term “provider” in contracts,
38 advertising and other communications, specify the type of provider being referred to by using
39 the provider’s recognized title which details education, training, license status and other
40 recognized qualifications; and supports this concept in state and federal health system reform.³

41
42 WHEREAS, multiple medical organizations, including the American Academy of Family Physicians
43 (AAFP⁴), American Psychiatric Association (APA), American Academy of Emergency Medicine (AAEM⁵),
44 and American College of Physicians (ACP⁶), have all come out with position papers stating their
45 opposition to the use of the term provider have been made public, with concerns including:

- 46 1. the tactical use of this term by insurance companies to increase their profit margins
47 2. the inherent ‘commercialization’ that comes with the use of the term ‘provider.’ This
48 commercialization refers to the breakdown of the personal relationship between physician and
49 patient, and instead replacing it with a market-based system with corresponding erosion of
50 ethical norms and practices.
51 3. The unethical exchange and sharing of responsibilities between non-physicians and physicians
52 for tasks originally designated solely for physicians;

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54 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that WSMA will create an educational campaign to highlight concerns
55 related to inappropriately using one title to group all medical professionals together, and

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57 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this educational campaign will specifically include all health care
58 organizations and agencies in a publicly transparent effort to move away from using a single title such as
59 Provider to describe all health care professionals.

² <https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/2019-06/a19-refcomm-b-annotated.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2b8GpnXi1V3E85BhNssnUC9Y5J5ONwHcS2ZtGdnAWVmGkhfrYKpP4zGO4>

³ <https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/2019-04/a19-bot09.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2REBGFwriJ3eboAxDdnP5l8wzeNgKKCTw78kOBAenj4kxycXsF8Ad5Dtk>

⁴ <https://www.aafp.org/about/policies/all/provider.html>

⁵ https://www.aaem.org/resources/statements/position/term-provider?fbclid=IwAR34WQLN2MUcqaZz4z_LVO5xmhwP2XNrVqUH36zvEXrkjm0HkwBfLN1LtSU

⁶ <https://acpinternist.org/archives/2019/09/defining-our-identity-does-not-include-the-p-word.htm?fbclid=IwAR3FzAdlhjL0l2M9vV2O1EKvIH2Sv6g47G9eOm2sIFlb0xINLeByj9x5Ohl>