

June 11, 2012
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Board committee to review physicians' responsibilities to supervise physician assistants

DES MOINES, IA – The Iowa Board of Medicine Friday (June 8, 2012) approved the creation of an ad hoc committee to look into the expectations for physicians who supervise physician assistants in the wake of a new law that decreases the physician-physician assistant supervisory ratio from 1-to-2 to 1-to-5.

Colleen Stockdale, M.D., Board chair, asked the committee to review supervisory requirements for physicians and determine if the Board's administrative rules, 653—Chapter 21, need amended. The new law, which becomes effective July 1, will allow a physician to supervise up to 5 physician assistants concurrently.

“Our focus is to protect the public,” said Dr. Stockdale. “The change in the supervisory ratio is a good time to look at guidance or directives for physicians who assume additional supervisory responsibilities.” She noted that with the 1-to-2 supervisory ratio, the Board has investigated cases in which physician assistants have been inadequately supervised. Approximately 17 percent of the physicians who practice in Iowa report supervising at least one physician assistant.

Jeffrey Snyder, M.D., the Board's vice-chair, was named to head the committee, which will include 2 or 3 other Board members and staff. Once the committee defines objectives, stakeholders, including the Iowa Board of Physician Assistants, will be invited to provide information or comments. Snyder noted that Iowa law requires collaboration between the boards of medicine and physician assistants.

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The Board of Medicine's administrative rules in 653—Chapter 21 define physicians who are ineligible to supervise physician assistants but do not provide guidance on what constitutes adequate supervision.

Some supervisory expectations are offered in administrative rules adopted by the Iowa Board of Physician Assistants. Physician assistants were initially regulated by the Board of Medicine, but a separate board was subsequently established.

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