

Elaine Appelbee MBE  
Chair, Bradford District and Craven Health and Care Partnership Board

Cc: NHS England  
Cc: West Yorkshire Health and Care Integrated Care Partnership  
Cc: Physician Associate Schools Council  
Cc: General Medical Council  
Cc: NHS Employers  
Cc: Royal College of General Practitioners

17 June 2024

Dear Elaine

Over the weekend, the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) was made aware of posters hosted on the Bradford District and Craven Health and Care Partnership (BDCHCP) website that describe physician associates (PAs) as physicians.

The language used on these posters is unacceptable. Describing PAs as physicians in patient awareness literature is not only intentionally misleading, but also irresponsible, unsafe and risks eroding the confidence of clinicians and patients. It is also [illegal to falsely use the protected title of physician](#), as set out in the Medical Act 1983.

We would welcome immediate reassurance that you will make it clear to all BDCHCP staff that the language used on these posters is unacceptable and wrong, and that they have a professional responsibility to describe their role to patients in a clear and transparent way.

National organisations and local employers must make it clear that this behaviour is wrong. As per [NHS England guidance](#), NHS organisations must be clear, honest and transparent when talking about the role of PAs, especially in patient-facing communications. PAs work as members of the wider multidisciplinary team (MDT) under the supervision of senior doctors. PAs are not doctors. They cannot and must not replace doctors. They must always work within a defined scope of competence; they are not independent medical practitioners, and they must be supervised appropriately by a consultant, GP or specialist doctor.

Most importantly, patients must always receive clear and accurate information about who is treating them and making decisions about their care. In October 2023 the Faculty of Physician Associates, which is currently hosted by the RCP, published [titles and introduction guidance](#) which makes it clear that PAs are not doctors and should introduce themselves clearly and with a full explanation about their role in the healthcare team.

**We would be grateful if BDCHCP could urgently remind all health and care staff of this guidance.**

With best wishes,

**Dr John Dean**  
RCP clinical vice president

**Dr Omar Mustafa**  
RCP interim registrar

**Dr Hilary Williams**  
RCP vice president for Wales  
Chair, RCP short life working group  
on the role of PAs