Physician Assistant
Nurse Practitioner

Pre-Health Advising
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http://explorehealthcareers.org/en/home

Occupational Outlook Handbook
http://www.bis.gov/ooh/healthcare/home.htm

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What is a Physician Assistant?

• A physician assistant (or PA) is a nationally certified and state-licensed medical professional. PAs practice medicine on healthcare teams with physicians and other providers.

• PAs practice and prescribe medication in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and all U.S. territories, with the exception of Puerto Rico.

• Physician assistants work in all areas of medicine, including primary care and family medicine, emergency medicine, and psychiatry. The work of physician assistants depends in large part on their specialty and what their supervising physician needs them to do. For example, a physician assistant working in surgery may close incisions and provide care before and after the operation. A physician assistant working in pediatrics may examine a child and give routine vaccinations.

• In rural and medically underserved areas, physician assistants may be the primary care providers at clinics where a physician is present only 1 or 2 days per week. In these locations, physician assistants confer with the physician and other healthcare workers as needed and as required by law.

Job Responsibilities

• Review patients’ medical histories
• Conduct physical exams to check patients’ health
• Order and interpret diagnostic tests, such as x rays or blood tests
• Make diagnoses concerning a patient’s injury or illness
• Give treatment, such as setting broken bones and immunizing patients
• Educate and counsel patients and their families—for example, answering questions about how to care for a child with asthma
• Prescribe medicine when needed
• Record a patient’s progress
• Research the latest treatments to ensure the quality of patient care
• Conduct or participate in outreach programs; talking to groups about managing diseases and promoting wellness
History behind the PA profession

• PA profession was created to improve and expand healthcare.

• Eugene A. Stead, MD of Duke University Medical Center initiated first class of PAs in 1965.

• Curriculum was based on Dr. Steads knowledge of the fast track training provided to doctors in World War II.

• The profession of physician assistant was developed based on the medical model.
  • Systematic Approach: Complaint, history, physical examination, ancillary tests if needed, diagnosis, treatment, and prognosis with and without treatment.
Most PA programs are approximately 26 months (3 academic years) and require the similar prerequisite courses as medical schools. Most programs also require students to have about three years of healthcare training and experience.

Students take courses in basic sciences, behavioral sciences and clinical medicine across subjects such as anatomy, pharmacology, microbiology, physiology and more.

PAs complete a total of more than 2,000 hours of clinical rotations in:
- Family medicine
- Internal medicine
- Obstetrics and gynecology
- Pediatrics
- General surgery
- Emergency medicine
- Psychiatry

Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam (PANCE)

State Licensure

Recertification every 10 years; 100 hours of continuing education every 2 years.
PA: Job Outlook

• Median Pay (2012): $90,930
  • Some PAs made more, some made less.

• Profession growth between 2012-2022: 38%
  • Much faster than average for all occupations.
  • Compared to 18% growth expected for physicians.

• Increased demand for healthcare services from the growing and aging population and widespread chronic disease, combined with a shortage of physicians, will result in increased demand for healthcare providers, such as physician assistants.
PA Program Details

• 190 accredited PA programs in the US
• Degree earned: Master’s
• Duration: 2-3 years
  • ~1 year didactic (classroom) work
  • ~1 year clinical rotations
• Pre-requisites
  • Courses - see next slide
  • Healthcare experience - PA programs are expecting that applicants have significant health and patient care related experience. Most prefer hands-on clinical care experience. The required number of hours for each programs vary, ranging from 250-3000 hours.
    • Most applicants complete their undergraduate degree and work for at least a year to gain experience and enhance their application.
    • Many programs ask for a LOR from your clinical healthcare supervisor.
• Standardized Test: GRE
  • Not all PA programs require the GRE. Some will also accept MCAT score in place of GRE.
Requirements for PA programs vary.
Review program websites and the links below for more information:

Physician Assistant Education Association: http://www.paeaonline.org/
CASPA: https://portal.caspaonline.org
What is competitive?

• Average for 2013 matriculated students
• GPA: ~3.5
• GRE: 50th percentile and above
• Healthcare experience: varies, but most admitted students have 1,000+ hours.
PA vs. MD/DO

• Many similarities in ability to care for patients.

• Schooling and Training:
  • Compact training based on medical model.
  • Ready for work in ¼ of the time with similar responsibilities.
  • No residency.

• Career Flexibility:
  • Collaborative relationship with doctor vs. working completely independently.
  • Flexibility to transition between areas of practice (internal medicine to Ob/Gyn with no additional training).
  • Residency for physicians dictates scope of practice; takes additional training to move around.

• Pay:
  • Pay is solid! Pay for PAs can vary based on where you work.
  • Yes, it is less than a doctor, however, think of loan payback and what that looks like for PAs vs. physicians.
  • Bottom line, money should not be the driving force behind pursuing a career in healthcare.
What is a Nurse Practitioner?

- Nurse practitioners (NPs) are advanced practice registered nurses who provide care to patients throughout the lifespan, from premature newborns to the elderly.
- They perform comprehensive and focused physical examinations; diagnose and treat common acute illnesses and injuries; provide immunizations; manage high blood pressure, diabetes, depression and other chronic health problems; order and interpret diagnostic tests such as X-rays and EKGs, as well as laboratory tests; prescribe medications and therapies; perform procedures; and educate and counsel patients and their families regarding healthy lifestyles and health care options.
- NPs can prescribe medications, including controlled substances, in all 50 states. In 26 states, NPs have authority to practice independently.

Job Responsibilities

- Ordering, performing and interpreting diagnostic tests such as lab work and x-rays.
- Diagnosing and treating acute and chronic conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, infections, and injuries.
- Prescribing medications and other treatments.
- Managing patients’ overall care.
- Counseling.
- Educating patients on disease prevention and positive health and lifestyle choices.
History behind the NP profession

• 1965 - Dr. Loretta Ford and Dr. Henry Silver develop first Nurse Practitioner program at University of Colorado.
• 1967 - Boston College initiates one of the earliest master’s programs for NPs.
• Profession has grown rapidly over the past 40+ years.
  • 2014 - 192,000 practicing NPs.
• NP profession is based on the nursing model.
  • Holistic patient care
  • Health promotion, disease prevention, and health education and counseling.
NP Preparation

• All NPs must complete a master's or doctoral degree program, and have advanced clinical training beyond their initial professional registered nurse preparation.

• Didactic and clinical courses prepare nurses with specialized knowledge and clinical competency to practice in primary care, acute care and long-term health care settings.

• NPs undergo rigorous national certification, periodic peer review, clinical outcome evaluations, and adhere to a code for ethical practices. Self-directed continued learning and professional development is also essential to maintaining clinical competency.

• NPs are licensed in all states and the District of Columbia, and practice under the rules and regulations of the state in which they are licensed. They provide high-quality care in rural, urban and suburban communities, in many types of settings including clinics, hospitals, emergency rooms, urgent care sites, private physician or NP practices, nursing homes, schools, colleges, and public health departments.
NP Job Outlook

• Median Pay (2012): $96,460
  • Some NPs made more, some made less.

• Profession growth between 2012-2022: 31%
  • Much faster than average for all occupations.

• Growth will occur primarily because of the effects of healthcare legislation, an increased emphasis on preventative care, and demand from the large, aging baby-boom population for healthcare services as they live longer and more active lives than previous generations.
Nurse Practitioner Program Details

- Direct entry programs - no nursing background required
- In 2012, there were 71 direct entry NP programs; 7 additional programs were in the development phase.
- Degree earned: Master’s
- Duration: varies, 2-4 years
- BSN and MSN? - Some programs award both degrees, but not all.
- Pre-requisites
  - Courses - see next slide
  - Healthcare experience - Not typically required by programs for admission, but it is HIGHLY recommended that you have exposure to nursing and the healthcare environment.
  - Standardized Test: GRE
    - Not all programs require the GRE.
MA: Direct Entry Nursing Programs

- Requirements for MSN programs vary.
- Review program websites and the links below for more information:

  American Association of Colleges of Nursing: [http://www.aacn.nche.edu/](http://www.aacn.nche.edu/)
What’s competitive?

• GPA: Minimum GPA of 3.0; Review each program to see if they indicate specific stats.

• GRE: 40th percentile and above; some programs may outline more specific GRE score requirements.

• Healthcare Experience: Most admitted students have some healthcare related experience in addition to other extracurriculars.

• Do your program research.
  • Some programs may value community service/ commitment to public health. If that is demonstrated through experiences, GPA might be less of a focus when reviewing an application.
NP vs. PA

• Attend nursing school vs. medical school or medical center.
• Focus of training/practice:
  • NP - Nurses follow a patient-centered model, in which they focus on disease prevention and health education as well as handle assessment, diagnosis and treatment.
  • PA - Physician assistants follow a disease-centered model, in which they focus on the biologic and pathologic components of health as well as are involved in assessment, diagnosis and treatment.
• Specialties
  • NP - Acute care, neonatal, pediatric, psych, anesthesiology
  • PA - Trained as generalist - breadth of clinical rotations allows for movement between areas of practice.
Questions??

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For appointments, call Student Financial and Academic Services at 781-736-3470
or book online here.

Thank you for attending!