

PA FACTS

What is a PA?

A physician assistant (PA) is a graduate of an accredited PA educational program who is authorized by the state to practice medicine with the supervision of a licensed physician. PAs are invaluable members of the health care team, working in concert with physicians to ensure the highest quality of care for patients.

What can a PA legally do?

Physicians may delegate to PAs those medical duties that are within the physician's scope of practice and the PA's training and experience and are allowed by law.

Such duties include performing physical examinations, diagnosing and treating illnesses, ordering and interpreting lab tests, assisting in surgery, providing patient education and counseling, and making rounds in nursing homes and hospitals. All states, the District of Columbia, and Guam authorize physicians to delegate prescriptive privileges to the PAs they supervise.

How was the first PA program started?

Recognizing that some residents of North Carolina had limited access to quality medical care, the chair of the Department of Medicine at the Duke University Medical Center established a program in 1965 to educate ex-military corpsmen to practice medicine with physician supervision. These first students had received extensive health care training during their military careers. The educational model for physician assistants was based in part on his experience with the fast-track training of doctors during World War II.

How does a person become a PA?

There are more than 140 accredited physician assistant educational programs in the United States. They are located at medical colleges and universities, teaching hospitals, and in the Armed Forces. All PA educational programs are accredited by one body, the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant.

Prior to admission, the typical PA student has a bachelor's degree and approximately four years of health care experience. PA educational programs run approximately 26 months, and PA students may take some of their classes with medical students.

To practice as a physician assistant: Attend an accredited PA program

- The typical student has a bachelor's degree and approximately 4 years of health care experience.
- Average 26 months of instruction

With class/lab instruction

More than 400 hours in basic sciences (with more than 75 hours in pharmacology) + approximately 175 hours in behavioral sciences + nearly 580 hours of clinical medicine

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|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Anatomy | Pathology |
| Pharmacology | Biochemistry |
| Clinical laboratory sciences | Microbiology |
| Physical diagnosis | Differential diagnosis |
| Pathophysiology | Medical ethics |
| Behavioral sciences | Physiology |

And clinical rotations

More than 2,000 hours, with an emphasis on primary care in ambulatory clinics, physicians' offices, and acute/long-term care facilities

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Family medicine | General surgery |
| Pediatrics | Psychiatry |
| Emergency medicine | Obstetrics/gynecology |
| Internal medicine | |

To practice

- Pass national PA certification exam administered by the National Commission on Certification of PAs (NCCPA) (open only to graduates of accredited PA programs)
- Obtain individual license from state medical or PA licensing board

To maintain certification

- Log 100 Continuing Medical Education credits over 2-year cycle
- Reregister every 2 years
- Sit for recertification exam every 6 years



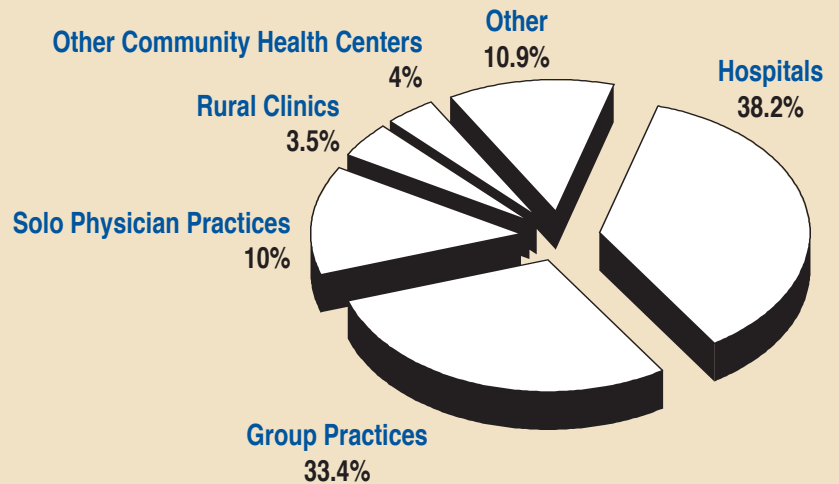
American Academy of Physician Assistants

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Where do PAs practice?

The country's 73,893 physician assistants work in virtually every medical and surgical setting. More than one-third (38.2%) are found in hospitals. More than 43 percent of respondents to the AAPA 2008 Physician Assistant Census indicate that their primary work setting is a group practice or solo-physician office. The remaining PAs can be found in a variety of settings, such as rural and community health centers, freestanding surgical facilities, nursing homes, school- or college-based facilities, industrial settings, and correctional facilities.

PA WORK SETTINGS



Source: AAPA 2008 Annual PA Census

What about reimbursement for services provided by PAs?

PAs offer great financial benefits to their employers by providing high-quality medical care for which most public and private third-party payers reimburse. Medicare and TRICARE reimburse the physician assistant's employer for services provided by PAs in virtually all practice settings, as well as for assisting at surgery. State Medicaid programs and most private insurers also cover services provided by PAs.

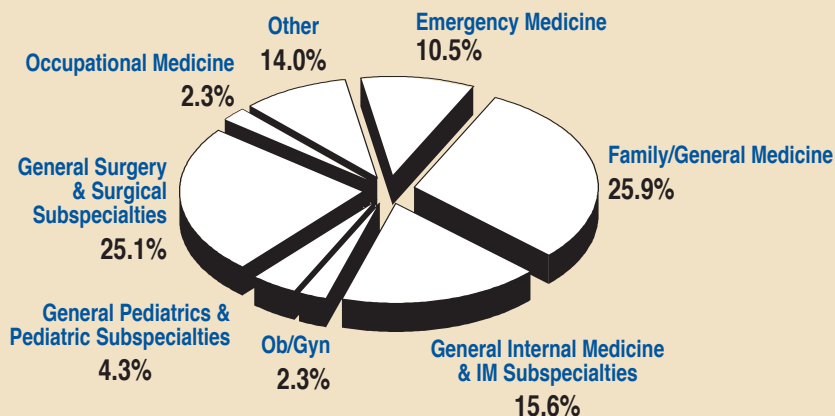
And the quality of PA services?

Studies conducted by the Rand Corporation have found that PAs save as much as 20 percent of the costs of medical care, can perform at least 80 percent of the functions in an ambulatory care practice, and are

widely accepted by patients. The congressional Office of Technology Assessment studied health care services provided by PAs and determined that "within their scope of practice, physician assistants provide health care that is indistinguishable in quality from care provided by physicians."

Professional liability insurance premiums are low because PAs have been involved in very few lawsuits.

PAs Work in Virtually Every Area of Medicine and Surgery



Source: AAPA 2008 Annual PA Census