
Physician Assistant



What is a Physician Assistant?

A **physician assistant (PA)** is a nationally **certified and state-licensed medical professional**.

PAs practice medicine on healthcare teams with physicians and other providers. They practice and prescribe medication in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the majority of the U.S. territories and the uniformed services.

Inside **PA** Training

“All in all, I’ve had an amazing experience joining the field. I feel like I have found a professional home. I wanted work that makes a real difference in people’s lives. I wanted work that was challenging, but not tedious. I wanted to be compensated well for what I do, and I wanted a field that was broad enough that I would grow into it and not get bored. So far so good.”

mypatraining.com/being-a-physician-assistant-part-i

What can a PA Do?

PAs can:

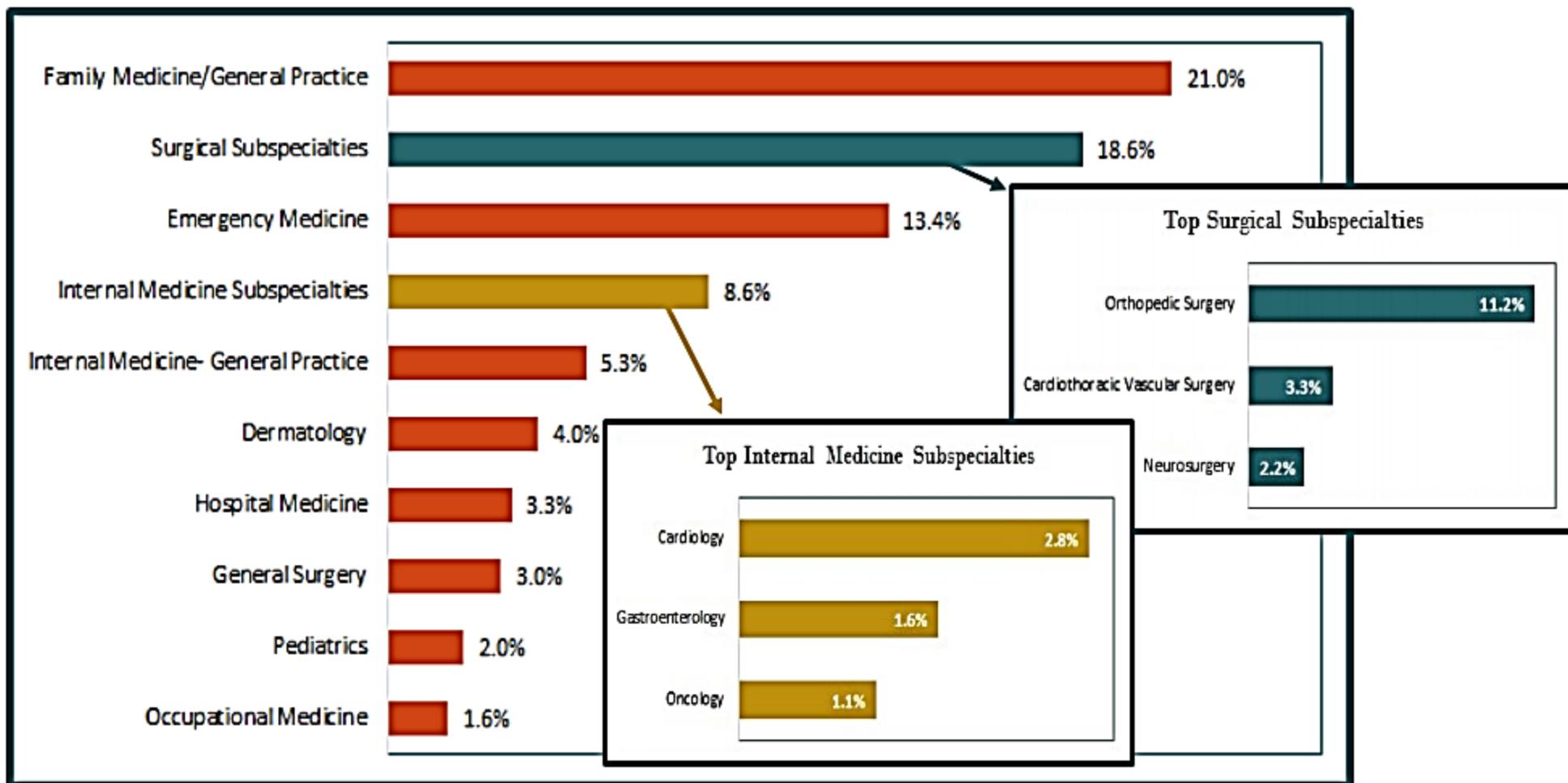
- Take a patient's medical history
- Conduct physical exams
- Diagnose and treat illnesses
- Order and interpret tests
- Develop treatment plans
- Counsel on preventive care
- Assist in surgery
- Write prescriptions
- Make rounds in hospitals and nursing homes

PAs' specific duties depend on:

- The setting in which they work
- Their level of experience
- Their specialty
- State laws



Top Ten PA Practice Areas by Percent



How are PAs different from Physicians?



Delegated Autonomy

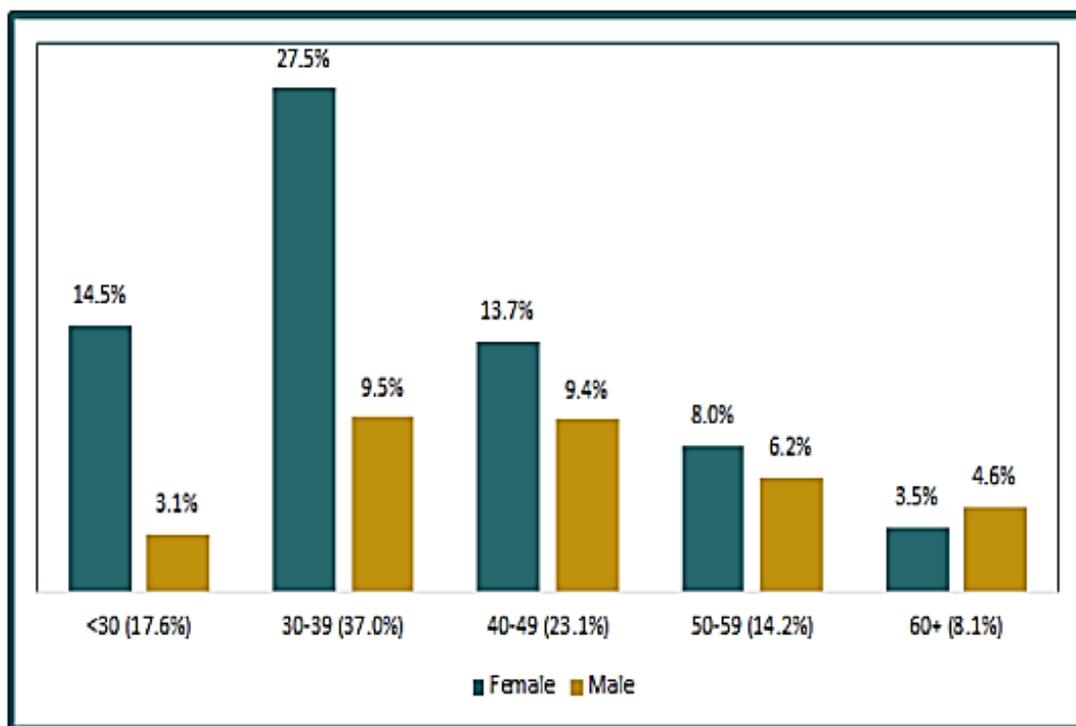
PAs are trained and educated similarly to physicians, and therefore share similar diagnostic and therapeutic reasoning.

However, PAs may assist doctors in surgical procedures but they themselves are not licensed to perform surgery.

PAs use autonomous decision-making for patient care, under the purview of a physician. This team model is an efficient way to provide high-quality medical care.

In rural areas, the PA may be the only healthcare provider on-site, collaborating with a physician elsewhere through telecommunication.

Gender and Age of Certified PAs



Gender	Number	Percent
Male	35,648	32.8%
Female	73,055	67.2%
Total	108,703	100.0%

Noteworthy:

- The median age of certified PAs was 38 in 2015.
- In 1980 36% of PAs were female¹
- Today 67.2% of all certified PAs are female.
- 42.0% of all certified PAs were female and under 40 years old

Age Group	Number	Percent
<30	19,157	17.6%
30-39	40,236	37.0%
40-49	25,119	23.1%
50-59	15,406	14.2%
60+	8,799	8.1%
TOTAL	108,717	100.0%

Race and Ethnicity of Certified PAs

Race	Number	Percent
White	82,240	86.7%
Black/African American	3,712	3.9%
Asian	5,012	5.3%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	344	0.4%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	418	0.4%
Other	3,088	3.3%
Total Responses	94,814	100%

Hispanic, Latino/a, or Spanish Ethnicity	Number	Percent
Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano/a	2,335	2.4%
Puerto Rican	739	0.8%
Cuban	461	0.5%
Other Hispanic, Latino/a, or of Spanish origin	2,395	2.5%
Total Responses	5,930	6.2%

Noteworthy:

In the last three years, there has been a slight increase in the percentage of PAs choosing multiple races (1.4% and 1.8% respectively).

The percentage of Hispanic PAs increased from 3.5% in 2000¹ to 6.2% in 2015.

5 Tips for Getting Into PA School



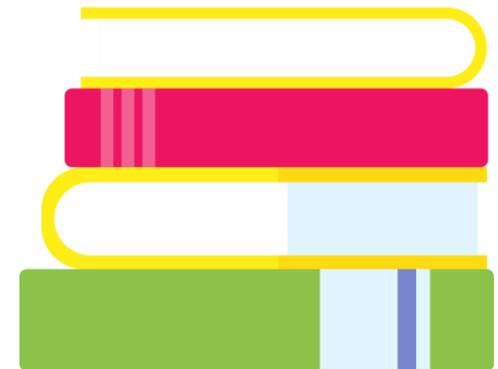
1. Prepare early: *find your program*, get clinical experience, keep up your GPA.
2. Get involved in extracurricular activities
3. Choose you undergrad classes wisely
4. Work in the summer: do some research, take some medical mission trips, be a medical or ER scribe
5. Find mentors

...details

Top PA Programs

according to US News and World Report

- Duke University (Durham, NC)
- University of Iowa (Iowa City, IA)
- Emory University (Atlanta, GA)
- George Washington University (Washington, DC)
- Oregon Health and Sciences University (Portland, OR)
- Quinnipiac University (Hamden, CT)
- University of Colorado (Aurora, CO)
- University of Utah (Salt Lake City, UT)
- University of Nebraska Medical Center (Omaha, NE)
- Wake Forest University (Winston-Salem, NC)



Meet Dr. Eugene Stead



*A young Dr. Eugene Stead, 1908-2005
Founder of the PA Program*

The PA profession was created to improve and expand healthcare. In the mid-1960s, physicians and educators recognized there was a shortage of primary care physicians. To remedy this, Dr. Eugene Stead of the Duke University Medical Center put together the first class of PAs in 1965. He selected Navy corpsmen who had received considerable medical training during their military service. Dr. Stead based the curriculum of the PA program on his knowledge of the fast-track training of doctors during World War II. The first PA class graduated from the Duke University PA program on Oct. 6, 1967.

The PA concept was lauded early on and gained acceptance and backing federally as early as the 1970s as a creative solution to physician shortages. The medical community helped support the profession and spurred setting accreditation standards, establishing a national certification and standardized examination, and developing continuing medical education requirements.

I want to become a PA! Where do I start?

Look into PA programs you want to apply to as early as your freshman year in college. You'll typically need to complete at least two years of college coursework in basic and behavioral sciences before applying to a PA program, which is very similar to premedical studies.

The majority of PA programs have the following prerequisites:

- Chemistry
- Microbiology
- Physiology
- Biology
- Anatomy

Many PA programs also require prior healthcare experience with hands-on patient care.

You can get healthcare experience by being a (not an exhaustive list):

- Medical assistant
- Lab assistant/phlebotomist
- Emergency medical technician (EMT)
- Registered nurse
- Paramedic
- Emergency room technician
- Medic or medical corpsman
- Surgical tech
- Peace Corps volunteer
- Certified nursing assistant (CNA)

Most students have a bachelor's degree and about three years of healthcare experience before entering a program.

Sample Curriculum at Duke University

	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	
Didactic Year	Physiology		Basic											
	Med Sciences		Clinical Med I			Clinical Med II			Clinical Med III					
	Anatomy				Surgery									
	Physical Diagnosis				Patient Assessment I			Patient Assessment II						
	Diagnostic Methods I				Diagnostic Methods II			Diagnostic Methods III						
	Pharmacology and Therapeutics I				Pharmacology and Therapeutics II			Pharmacology and Therapeutics III						
			Evidence Based Medicine I			Practice and the Health System			Behavioral Aspects of Medicine					
Clinical Year	ER Med.	Internal Medicine		OB/GYN	Peds	Primary Care	Evid. Bas. Med II	Behav. Med			Gen Surg.	Elect.	Elect.	Sr Seminar

The first 12 months of the program are devoted to preclinical studies, and the last 12 months to clinical experiences in primary care and the medical and surgical specialties. All courses are required, no transfer credit is accepted, and no credit is awarded for pre-admission experiential learning. Only full-time students are admitted to the curriculum.

During the second year of the PA Program, students complete 10 rotations. These clinical experiences are composed of eight required and two elective rotations, and a final senior seminar course. Two of these rotations are required to take place in a medically underserved area. Students must successfully complete the end of rotation exam at the conclusion of all required rotations as well as other clinical evaluations throughout the year. Clinical year students will return to campus throughout the second year to participate in Call Back days and evaluation exercises.

What are some skills necessary to become a PA?

Clinical Competence

Be able to address the needs of patients in hospitals, emergency care facilities, and other medical setting and handle all types of patient needs and situations promptly and efficiently

Effective Communication Skills

Communicate directly with patients and colleagues in a variety of settings, often in high-stress conditions

Operational Management

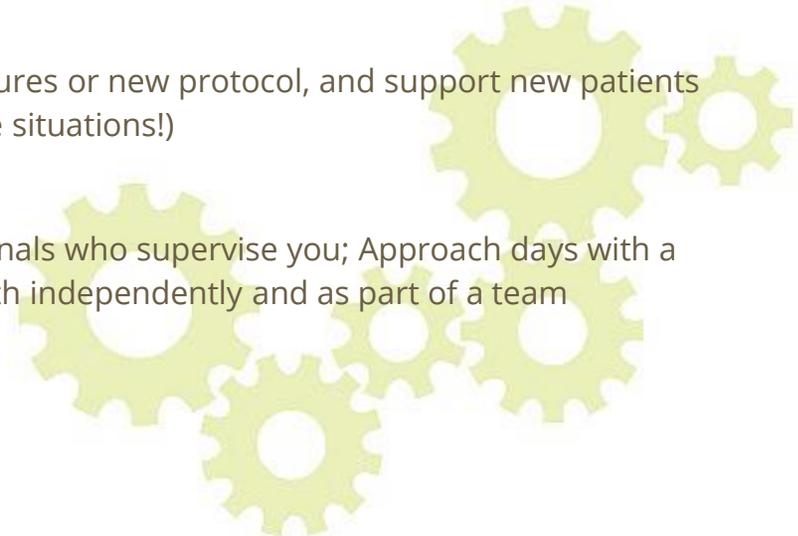
Take care of clerical tasks, oversee operations, and handle the administrative side of clinical operations

Adaptability and Flexibility

Handle emergency visits, assist physicians with unexpected procedures or new protocol, and support new patients during the intake process (often during stressful, unpredictable situations!)

Service-Oriented

Provide excellent service, both to patients and to medical professionals who supervise you; Approach days with a service-oriented mindset and be able to perform job duties both independently and as part of a team



Additional Information and Resources

Physician Assistant Education Association: paeaonline.org

American Academy of Physician Assistants: AAPA.org

Overview of PA Career: explorehealthcareers.org/en/Career/19/Physician_Assistant

Centralized Application Service for PAs (CASPA): <http://paeaonline.org/caspa/>