

What is a Physician Assistant (PA)?

Physician Assistants are licensed medical providers who are able to practice in all areas of medicine with physician supervision. As part of their comprehensive responsibilities, PA's conduct physical exams, diagnose and treat illnesses, order and interpret tests, counsel patients on preventive health care, perform surgery, and are able to write prescriptions.

The physician and PA practice together, as members of a medical team, to provide all patients with the highest quality health care.

How is a Physician Assistant educated?

Physician Assistants are educated in competitive and intensive medical programs accredited by the American Medical Association. PA's are educated in a medical model much like a physician's training. PA students are taught, as are medical students, to diagnose and treat medical problems. Education consists of classroom and laboratory instruction in medical and behavioral sciences (such as anatomy, pharmacology, pathophysiology, clinical medicine, and physical diagnosis), followed by clinical rotations in internal medicine, family medicine, surgery, dermatology, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, emergency medicine, and psychiatry.

After completion of their medical training, PA's are required to pass a national board examination in order to become licensed. Unlike physicians, PA's are not required to complete residency programs. However, there are specialized residency programs available for PA's who wish to gain further training and education in one area of medicine. All PA's must log continuing medical education credits and sit for recertification every six years.

Physician Assistants in Dermatology

Physician Assistants have been practicing with dermatologists for over 30 years. Having a PA as part of a dermatology practice provides patients with superior care while allowing the dermatologist to spend more time with complex patient cases. Physician Assistants diagnose and provide medical and surgical treatment for a wide variety of skin problems. Building on their primary care training and experience, dermatology PA's are able to independently manage various skin conditions including rashes, acne, skin tags, warts, moles, infections of the skin and nails, and skin cancers.

PA's are experienced to perform simple and complex excisions, biopsies, and destruction of lesions. In addition, dermatology PA's perform cosmetic procedures including BOTOX, collagen, micro-dermabrasion and various laser treatments.