

# PAs PRACTICE MEDICINE

## WHAT IS A PA?

A 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. Today, there are more than 108,500 certified PAs in the United States.

## WHAT DO PAs DO?

PAs practice medicine.

PAs are nationally certified and licensed, most often by state medical boards, to practice medicine and prescribe medication in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and all U.S. territories, with the exception of Puerto Rico.

PAs can obtain medical histories, conduct physical exams, diagnose and treat illnesses, order and interpret tests, write prescriptions, perform medical procedures like joint injections, counsel patients on preventive healthcare, assist in surgery, and make rounds in nursing homes and hospitals, among many other medical services.

## WHERE DO PAs PRACTICE?

- Roughly one-fourth (26.6 percent) of PAs practice in primary care, and all other PAs practice in specialty medicine.<sup>1</sup>
- More than half of PAs (52.7 percent) work in a physician or group practice.<sup>2</sup>
- More than one-fourth (29.9 percent) practice in hospital settings (university or other). The remaining PAs work in a variety of settings, including community health centers, freestanding surgical facilities, nursing homes, school- or college-based facilities, industrial settings and correctional institutions.<sup>2</sup>
- The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is the largest single employer of PAs.<sup>2</sup>

## HOW ARE PAs EDUCATED?

- There are currently 210 accredited PA programs graduating about 8,900 new PAs each year.<sup>3</sup>
- PAs are often educated alongside physicians in medical schools, academic medical centers and residencies. Because their education is modeled on the medical school curriculum, with a combination of classroom instruction and clinical rotations, PAs share diagnostic and therapeutic reasoning with physicians.
- After a year of classroom study, PAs complete a minimum of 2,000 hours of clinical rotations with an emphasis in family medicine, internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, general surgery, emergency medicine and psychiatry.

## TO BECOME A PA, PAs MUST:

Attend an accredited PA program ...

- The typical entering student has a bachelor's degree and approximately four years of healthcare experience.
- The average graduate program takes 27 continuous months (three academic years) to complete. Nearly all award master's degrees.

... with class and lab instruction and clinical rotations.

- PA students take more than 75 hours in pharmacology, 175 hours in behavioral sciences, more than 400 hours in basic sciences and nearly 580 hours of clinical medicine.
- PA students complete a minimum of 2,000 hours of clinical rotations.

## TO PRACTICE AS A PA, PAs MUST:

- Graduate from an accredited program and pass the national PA certification exam administered by the NCCPA.
- Obtain a state license.
- Complete 100 hours of continuing medical education every two years.
- Recertify every 10 years through an exam that evaluates generalist medical knowledge. PAs recertify as generalists, not specialists.

## WHY WERE PAs CREATED?

PAs have been practicing medicine for nearly 50 years. The PA profession was created to address a shortage of quality medical providers in the 1960s. The chair of the Department of Medicine at the Duke University Medical Center established a program in 1965 that educated military corpsmen to practice medicine. The first PAs graduated from Duke University in 1967.

## WHAT ABOUT REIMBURSEMENT FOR SERVICES PROVIDED BY PAs?

PAs offer great value to their employers by providing high-quality medical and surgical care to patients for which most public and private third-party payers reimburse. While PAs always work with physicians in a team approach to healthcare, services provided by PAs are often billed under the PA's name as the rendering provider, dependent on the policies of the individual payer. A physician does not necessarily need to be on site or see the patient, as the PA can provide many services that physicians do.

## AND THE QUALITY OF PA CARE?

PAs are proven to create access, elevate health outcomes and increase patient satisfaction. Studies identify high-quality care with physician-PA teams and have shown that the quality of care provided by PAs is comparable to that of physicians, that PAs enhance care coordination, and that practices relying on PAs are more cost-effective than those without PAs.

## TOP SPECIALTIES

Primary Care	26.6%
Surgical Subspecialties	19.5%
Emergency Medicine	13.8%
Internal Medicine Subspecialties	7.6%

## TOP STATES

The states with the greatest number of recently certified PAs include: New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, California and Florida.<sup>4</sup>

## VITAL STATISTICS

The profession is projected to grow 30% by 2024, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.



50



states and the District of Columbia authorize PAs prescribing privileges.

262



The number of PA programs expected by 2019<sup>3</sup>

More than 108,500



certified PAs are in the workforce today, according to the NCCPA.

\$93,800



was the median annual salary for a PA in 2013.

The typical number of patients PAs see



15 per day & 60 per week

The typical PA writes 50 prescriptions per week (numbers vary by setting and specialty)<sup>2\*</sup>



## PRIMARY EMPLOYER



Physician (Solo or Group Practice) 52.7%



Hospital (University or Other) 29.9%



Government (Federal, State or Local) 3.0%



Federally Qualified Health Center 2.9%



<sup>2</sup>2015 AAPA National Survey

<sup>3</sup>ARC-PA

<sup>4</sup>NCCPA 2014 Statistical Profile of Certified PAs

\*This number reflects the median number of prescriptions written.