PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT

Physician assistants, frequently called PAs, have a broad scope of duties and responsibilities, largely governed by the medical setting in which they work. PAs are regulated by the Texas State Board of Medical Examiners and work under the supervision of physicians. Texas requires that the PA's supervising physician register with the Texas State Board of Medical Examiners and that PAs be licensed.

Duties of PAs working under a primary care physician include: performing appropriate interviews and physical examinations; ordering and screening results of laboratory diagnostic studies; organizing and integrating information derived from the interview, examination, and laboratory; assisting with the performance of clinical procedures; instructing and counseling patients regarding preventative health care behaviors; monitoring responses to physician-directed programs of therapy; responding independently to life-threatening situations; facilitating patient access to appropriate health care services; making tentative assessments; making tentative diagnostic and therapeutic plans in such a way that the physician can perceive the medical problems and determine appropriate diagnostic and therapeutic steps; assisting the physician by performing diagnostic and therapeutic procedures; managing various common medical problems; treating minor cuts and wounds; removing casts; and changing dressings. In addition, PAs are employed as first and second assistants in surgery, particularly in cardiovascular and orthopedic surgery.

A Brief History of the Profession

The Physician Assistant (PA) profession originated in the mid-1960’s from the intuitive vision of Dr. Eugene Stead and others from Duke University, the University of Colorado, the University of Washington and Wake Forest University. These dedicated leaders recognized a need for a unique medical education program to meet the growing needs of primary health care delivery in the United States. Their goal was to train highly skilled health care professionals to assist physicians in the delivery of quality patient care. In the process, they developed a curriculum that taught individuals a body of clinical knowledge and skills that previously had been regarded as the professional domain of the physician.

The first program and the first class of six former corpsmen and medics with combat experience began at Duke University in 1965. Since that time, the PA profession has seen tremendous growth. PAs are recognized and respected as integral members of the health care team. PAs have been enabled to practice in 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam and Puerto Rico, and they are prominent health care providers in the uniformed services, National Health Service Corp, the Veterans Administration, and federal and state correctional facilities. PAs have delegated prescriptive authority in 41 states and in federal facilities. PAs are represented by the American Academy of Physician Assistants, and in Texas by the Texas Academy of Physician Assistants.
Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center
Physician Assistant Program
School of Allied Health Sciences
Department of Laboratory Sciences & Primary Care
3600 N Garfield
Midland, TX 79705
432-620-9905
806-743-3220 (Admissions)
allied.health@ttuhsc.edu
www.ttuhsc.edu/sah

University of North Texas Health Science Center at Fort Worth
Physician Assistant Studies
3500 Camp Bowie Blvd
Ft. Worth, TX 76107-2699
817-735-2301
817-735-2204 (Admissions)
PAAdmissions@hsc.unt.edu
www.hsc.unt.edu

The University of Texas Health Sciences Center at San Antonio
Department of Physician Assistant Studies
7703 Floyd Curl Dr, MC6249
San Antonio, TX 78229-3900
210-567-8810
210-567-8811
pastudies@uthscsa.edu
www.uthscsa.edu/sah/pastudies

The University of Texas Medical Branch
Physician Assistant Program
School of Allied Health Sciences
301 University Blvd
Galveston, Texas 77555-1145
409-772-3046
www.sahis.utmb.edu/pas

The University of Texas Pan American
Physician Assistant Studies Program
1201 W. University Drive
Edinburg, TX 78539
956-381-2292
956-381-2298
evillarreal@panam.edu
www.panam.edu/dept/pasp

02/08 CAREERS/PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT  3