

Introduction with certified authority to medically screen

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INTRODUCTION What is a Physician Assistant? A Physician Assistant is a medical provider with certified authority to medically screen and treat patients.

They are also empowered to prescribe medications and perform medical procedures as needed. A Physician Assistant can be found in medical hospitals, specialty clinics and doctor's offices around the nation. The caveat being that they work under collaboration with a Physician to ensure effective medical care is provided. They are 1 of 3 medical providers with this authority, the other 2 being Nurse Practitioners and Medical Doctors. Unlike the aforementioned medical providers, a Physician Assistant is educated and trained in General Medicine. However, this does not limit them to practicing General Medicine only.

Physician Assistants are widely known for the lateral mobility available to them in choosing their career path. They can interchange between specialties without the requirement of additional education. In fact, a Physician Assistant frequently works in more than 1 specialty in their life time.

The path to becoming a Physician Assistant has always been the career that I've wanted to pursue. Providing medical attention to those in need is commonly on the top of everyone's list and it is no different for me. However, one might ask why a Physician Assistant over a Medical Doctor? The answer is simple for me. I have never wanted to be tied down to one specialty. I have always been intrigued by multiple systems in the body from the heart, to the lungs, to the skin and so on. What makes the Physician Assistant career shine

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is their ability to work in multiple specialties over their employment. My brother works in the ER of a hospital as a Physician Assistant while also working in an urgent care clinic just down the road from his home. If he wakes up tomorrow morning wanting to work in a Cardiologist's office then he can! No additional education required.

The ability of a Physician Assistant to interchange between specialties like this is invaluable and is the main reason why I have been attracted to this career path. EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION A Physician Assistant is typically required to obtain a Bachelor's Degree of the student's choosing (typically one that is science related.) Many Physician Assistant programs require pre-requisites, such as Anatomy and Physiology, Organic Chemistry, etc.

. However, no 2 schools are alike in their elective requirements. A Physician Assistant program is typically 27 months long but some are as long as 36 months. This program includes education both in the classroom and within a clinic or hospital. The first year of education is strictly in the classroom where students are required to "hit the books." The curriculum is heavily based off of the program used for medical students and consists of anatomy, physiology, pathology, genetics and pharmacology.

The second year consists of 10 clinical rotations in 10 different specialties, ranging from Cardiology to ER to Pediatrics. 7 of these specialty rotations are required of the student, however, the last 3 are to be chosen by the student based off of their personal interests. Once the required 2,000 hours of

clinical practice has been reached, the student is prepared to take the certification exam. The Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam, or PANCE, is a computer based multiple choice exam that is separated into 5 different sections, taking 1 hour each. The exam is scored from 200 – 800.

Once the student has passed, they are allowed to put their training into action and work as a Physician Assistant. There are numerous amounts of organizations directed towards bettering the Physician Assistant community. The American Academy of Physician Assistants, or AAPA, is arguably the largest organization in the Nation.

In their own words, the organization “ works to ensure the professional growth, personal excellence and recognition of PAs. We also enhance their ability to improve the quality, accessibility and cost-effectiveness of patient-centered healthcare.” The Physician Assistant career began in 1968 and has been watched over by the AAPA organization since. Not only are they working to better the community now, but they are working hard to establish improvements within the field. For example, Physician Assistants are seeking the credibility to work independently of doctors and eventually open their own clinics.

This would be a monumental step for the community moving forward.

INFORMATION NEEDS

Sadly, it is not infrequent to experience a situation where a doctor questions a Physician Assistant’s authority. The following is a typical scenario representing this case: An 18 year old boy presents to the ED with sudden onset right lower quadrant abdominal pain

that is sharp in nature. Upon examination, the Physician Assistant finds that the patient has tenderness to palpation in the right lower quadrant with a positive McBurney's Point Sign. The Physician Assistant suspects acute appendicitis. CT of the abdomen confirms his suspicion. The patient is to be admitted for emergent surgery in the morning.

The Physician Assistant consults a Gastroenterologist about the patient. After hearing the findings, the GI doctor believes that the patient can be sent home and the surgery can be done as an out-patient. The 2 medical providers disagree and the GI doctor questions the Physician Assistant's credibility.

To evaluate the situation, we will answer a few questions about the medical care given. First, how did the Physician Assistant come to the conclusion that the patient has appendicitis? Typically, the Physician Assistant would know that the patient's symptoms are text book for appendicitis. However, there are resources available for any new providers who are not accustomed to the ER setting, such as the doctor that is overseeing the care or resources available on the internet. The National Institutes of Health is a good resource for medical questions that need answering on the fly. Databases are updated frequently and contain the newest information regarding patient treatment available.

This allows up-to-date patient care to ensure the most effective treatment. So, using the education they've obtained, consulting medical providers around them and researching health databases on the internet will ultimately provide an answer to the medical question. Second, how should the patient

be treated in this scenario? Typically a Physician Assistant will consult with the doctor who is overseeing them in the ER.

They both agree that the patient is to be admitted for pain treatment and emergent surgery in the morning. The Hospitalist is to be consulted to admit the patient, who agrees to do so. They require a GI consult in the morning. However, the Gastroenterologist refuses as they believe that an admission is not required.

That brings us to the third question, How does a Physician Assistant handle a situation where their credibility is questioned? If this is ever the case, the doctor overseeing the Physician Assistant should be notified of the push back from the GI doctor. Ultimately, it is the ER doctor's decision whether to admit or have the patient follow up as out-patient. Hopefully, the doctors can resolve the issue and can agree on the treatment that is best for the patient. INFORMATION RESOURCES Important journals used by Physician Assistants include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The Journal of the American Academy of Physician Assistants – A peer reviewed journal specifically for Physician Assistants that includes articles regarding case studies, clinical trials, developing research and professional interests.
- The Journal of the American Medical Association – A peer reviewed journal available to medical providers that contains published research, editorials, and articles focused on the sciences.
- The British Medical Journal – A UK based, peer reviewed medical journal containing podcasts, videos, blogs and articles covering numerous subjects, such as: clinical trials, medical news, continuing education, and political campaigns.

Important databases used by Physician Assistants include: PubMedHealth

- A free database available to the public and health care providers alike, containing informational resources geared towards the life sciences and medicine.

· MedlinePlus- Another free database available to the public, Medline provides health and medicinal information ranging over 1, 000 different topics. Important websites used by Physician Assistants include:

· National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants – A non-profit organization established to provide certification programs for Physician Assistants and provide continuing education post

certification. · National Institute of Health – An agency collaborating with the US Department of Health with purposes to advance research and education in healthcare and medicinal practices. · American Medical

Association – The largest association of medical providers in the world that publishes the Journal of the American Medical Association (explained above).

· American Academy of Physician Assistants – A society of Physician Assistants represented across the nation. This organization prides itself in its ability to “ensure the professional growth, personal excellence and recognition of Physician Assistants.” · The PALife- A collection of resources for aspiring Physician Assistants, Physician Assistant students and current Physician Assistants. Some resources include: PANCE exam practice, advice on applications, and continuing education. The following is a research article that may be typical for a Physician Assistant to encounter: TITLE:

Diagnosis of Right Lower Quadrant Pain and Suspected Acute

Appendicitis CITATION: Dahabreh IJ, Adam GP, Halladay CW, Steele DW, Daiello LA, Weiland LS, Zgodic A, Smith BT, Herliczek TW, Shah N, Trikalinos TA.

Diagnosis of Right Lower Quadrant Pain and Suspected Acute Appendicitis. Comparative Effectiveness Review No. 157. (Prepared by the Brown Evidence-based Practice Center under Contract No. 290-2012-00012-I.) AHRQ Publication No.

15(16)-EHC025-EF. Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality; December 2015. PRACTICE SECTION According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, a typical Physician Assistant is expected to make \$97,420 annually full time. It is important to note that full time is between 12 - 14 shifts per month. That is approximately 3 shifts per week. Typically, a Physician Assistant will work 15 - 20 shifts per month which accumulates to more than \$150,000 annually. A real life job search shows the following information: SUMMARY The Physician Assistant for MD Anderson The Woodlands will be supervise the daily treatments in the ATC in the absence of a supervising physician. SALARY RANGE Minimum: \$87,200 - Midpoint: \$109,000 - Maximum: \$130,800 ESSENTIAL JOB FUNCTIONS Provides assessment, triage and therapeutic management of patient/family need throughout the disease process as an integral part of an interdisciplinary team.

Acts under the authority and supervision of the attending physician and in accordance with regulations, hospital policy, protocols and clinical pathways.

Obtains medical histories, performs physical examinations, reviews/orders diagnostic tests and radiographic results, formulates and manages patient treatment plans and outcomes. Performs as first or second assist on operative cases, using fine motor skills and manual dexterity.

Performs procedures, prescribes treatment and signs prescriptions in accordance with institution and state requirements. Screens physician calls to educate patient/family on care and resources. Makes rounds with interdisciplinary team. Collaborates in research projects, formulates protocols and applies research to practice. EDUCATION Required: Graduate of a Physician Assistant training program approved by the Council of Medical Education of the American Medical Association.

EXPERIENCE Required: None Preferred: Experienced PA preferred. Medical Oncology experience preferred. LICENSE/CERTIFICATION Required: PA certification by the National Commission of Certification of Physician Assistants. Licensed by the Texas State Board of Physician Assistant Examiners.

SUMMARY Physician Assistants are an integral part of healthcare utilized in clinics, hospitals and offices around the world. The demand for these providers is increasing astronomically due to their ability to work in multiple specialties. Receiving education and certification takes as little as 6 years with PA programs littered around the country. Thanks to the growing popularity, there is an abundance of resources available to aspiring or current Physician Assistants in the form of: health databases, peer

reviewed journals and varying websites. Becoming a Physician Assistant has been on my radar for as long as I can remember and I look forward to pursue this promising career. CONCLUSION There are many things that I have learned in this class that can be applied to my career pursuit. Namely, the ability to utilize databases online to enhance my education.

A Physician Assistant is taught medical information as we know it. However, information is being updated constantly. Medical care and pharmacology is no different. With the resources utilized in class, such as PubMed, I am confident in knowing that I have up-to-date information at the tips of my fingers. That being said, some databases can be overwhelming with the amount of information given. Over the time of the course, we have effectively learned how to navigate and filter our searches to find the most pertinent answers to our questions. Continuing your education is important for an ever changing world of information, especially for a Physician Assistant.

CITATIONS Search of “ Dermatology PA jobs in Texas” – <https://www.indeed.com/q-Physician-Assistant-Dermatology-l-Texas-jobs.html? vjk=777bea8537250f0a> American Academy of Physician Assistants – <https://www.aapa.org/US> Bureau of Labor Statistics - <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes291071.html> The Journal of the American Academy of Physician Assistants – <https://www.aapa.org/about/business-opportunities/jaapa-advertising/> The Journal of the American Medical Association – <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama> The British Medical Journal – <http://journals.bmj.com/> PubMed Health – <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/> MedLine Plus – <https://medlineplus.gov/>

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gov/ National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants -

<http://www.nccpa.net>/National Institute of Health - <https://www.nih.gov/>

American Medical Association - <https://www.ama-assn.org/>