What is a PA?

PAs (physician associates/physician assistants) are licensed clinicians who practice medicine in every specialty and setting. Trusted, rigorously educated and trained healthcare professionals, PAs are dedicated to expanding access to care and transforming health and wellness through patient-centered, team-based medical practice.

AT A GLANCE

PA profession established in 1967

Approximately 178,700 PAs in the U.S.

PAs have more than 500 million patient interactions per year

EDUCATION BY THE NUMBERS

308 PA Programs in the U.S.

The Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA), 2024

2,000 hours of clinical rotations

Educated at MASTER’S DEGREE level

Programs are 27 months or 3 academic years (bachelor’s degree is required for acceptance)

To obtain a license, PAs must:

Graduate from an accredited PA program

Pass a certification exam

To maintain their certification, PAs must complete:

100 hours of continuing medical education (CME after every two years)

A recertification exam every 10 years

Updated June 2024
PAs practice in every work setting

- 50.8% – Outpatient Office or Clinic
- 37.4% – Hospital
- 4.5% – Urgent Care Center
- 2.4% – Other

2024 AAPA Salary Survey. All data based on clinically practicing PAs in the U.S.

*Other refers to a variety of work settings including but not limited to schools/universities, rehabilitation facilities, nursing homes and correctional facilities.

PAs practice medicine in all specialties

- 27.8% – Surgical Subspecialties
- 26.4% – Other*
- 20.1% – Primary Care
- 13.2% – Internal Medicine Subspecialties
- 7.4% – Emergency Medicine Subspecialties
- 3.4% – No Specialty
- 1.7% – Pediatric Subspecialties

2024 AAPA Salary Survey. All data based on clinically practicing PAs in the U.S.

*Other refers to a variety of healthcare settings including but not limited to psychiatry, hospice and palliative care, obstetrics and gynecology, addiction medicine, pain management, public health and dermatology.

PA Profession in the News

- #5 Best 100 Jobs List U.S. News & World Report 2024
- #4 Best STEM Jobs List U.S. News & World Report 2024

What Patients Say About PAs

- 91% Agree PAs are part of the solution to healthcare workforce shortages
- 89% Improve health outcomes for patients
- 93% PAs add value to healthcare teams

*2023 AAPA Harris Poll

*The research was conducted online in the U.S. by The Harris Poll on behalf of AAPA among 2,519 adults age 18+. The survey was conducted from February 23 – March 9, 2023. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish.

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