

# Physician Assistants: Information on the Profession

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## Abstract

A Physician Assistant (PA) is an individual trained and licensed to practice medicine under the supervision of a licensed physician. This profession is at this time exclusively one of the U.S. medical community.

The profession was founded in the mid 1960's in an effort to provide primary care in areas of physician shortage. Over the last three decades, the profession has broadened its scope to encompass virtually every specialty area in modern medicine. Although about half of all PAs still work in primary care, many PAs practice in surgical specialties, in-patient hospital settings, emergency rooms and out-patient specialty environments.

PAs are trained under the medical model often within medical school and side-by-side with medical students. The training lasts from 2-3 years with the typical entering student holding a bachelorate degree and prior experience in medicine. Training consists of both didactic courses and clinical experience, as is the typical training of a medical student. As many programs are now offering advanced degrees, some programs also provide education in research.

For individuals who would like additional information on the PA profession, the web-site of the American Academy of Physician Assistants can be found at: <http://www.aapa.org>

## References

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