

Welcome a Physician Assistant into your Community

The American Medical Association found that physician assistants enhance practice efficiency: solo practice physicians who employ physician assistants experience expanded practice, greater efficiency and greater access to care for their patients.

A Physician Assistant (PA)

- is a certified health care professional
- works closely with a supervising physician to provide the highest quality of care
- has graduated from an accredited PA educational program
- is a valuable member of the healthcare team

The Education of a PA

- Rigorous didactic training and clinical experience
- 25-36 months of classroom and clinical training



“If current trends continue, by 2025 there will be a statewide shortage of nearly 2,200 primary care providers.”

SOURCE: 2011 THE COLORADO HEALTH FOUNDATION

2,471
Physician Assistants
in Colorado

SOURCE: 2010 AAPA CENSUS

Provide:

- Primary care practice; evaluating patients by taking a medical history, performing an exam, ordering and interpreting laboratory and imaging tests, writing prescriptions, and ordering treatments
- Physician assistants have prescriptive authority in all 50 states and work in virtually all health care settings
- Studies have consistently shown that physician assistants provide high-quality care with outcomes similar to physician-provided care
- Patients have reported satisfaction with medical care provided by physician assistants equal to medical care provided by physicians

“Introduction of the physician assistant profession in the early 1970s has been one of several promising strategies to expand the primary care workforce, particularly in rural and underserved areas.”

SOURCE: 2011 HEALTH CARE INSTITUTE

According to the Medical Group Management Association (MGMA), physician assistants generate revenues greater than their compensation costs.

How physician assistants decrease the cost of healthcare

- PA labor costs are more affordable; practices pay less in overall costs for a PA as compared to a physician
- Physician assistants provide preventive services which reduce the need for more costly acute and chronic care management
- Patients can be seen more promptly, cutting down on lost time from work, which leads to decrease in patient costs

High patient satisfaction levels for services provided by physician assistants, ranging between 86 and 96 percent.

SOURCE: KAISER FOUNDATION RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Physician assistants not only treat disease, but they also promote health, decreasing healthcare demand through preventative care.

- Colorado has a geographically maldistributed physician workforce. The majority of health care professionals practice in urban or suburban settings, leaving large numbers of rural communities with inadequate or no primary care resources
- The PA profession is one of several promising strategies to expand the primary care workforce, particularly in rural and other underserved areas
- Studies have found that physician assistants were more likely to choose to practice in a rural community when they were familiar with the area, lifestyle and culture of local residents

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Physician Assistant Facts

84,066

Number of certified physician assistants in the U.S. in 2012

SOURCE: BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

Quality of Physician Assistant care

- Numerous studies have found that the quality of care that Physician Assistants provide is comparable to that of physicians
- “Physician assistants provide health care that is indistinguishable in quality from care provided by physicians” according to the Congressional Office of Technology

\$80,000 median annual compensation from primary employer of a full-time clinically practicing PA in 2010.

SOURCE: BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

What is a Physician Assistant?

A Physician assistant is a certified health care professional licensed to practice medicine under the supervision of a licensed physician and within the scope of practice specified by the medical practice act of their particular state.

Physician assistants are formally trained to examine patients, diagnose injuries and illnesses, and provide treatment.

Duties

- Work under the supervision of a physician
- Review patient medical history
- Conduct physical exams
- Order and interpret diagnostic tests, such as x-rays or blood tests
- Make diagnoses concerning a patient's injury or illness
- Provide treatment, including wound repair and fracture management
- Provide patient education and counsel patients and their families about prevention and management of illness or injury
- Prescribe medications

SOURCE: BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

Physician assistants are invaluable members of the health care team and work in partnership with physicians to ensure the highest quality of care for patients.

Becoming a Physician Assistant

To practice as a Physician Assistant, individuals must

- Graduate from an accredited PA program and pass the certification exam administered by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants
- Obtain a license in the state in which the PA is practicing
- Complete 100 hours of continuing medical education over a two-year cycle AND pass a recertification exam every 10 years



Profile of a Colorado Physician Assistant

- 18% aged 55 or older
- 92% White, non-Hispanic
- 67% female
- 26% spent their childhood in a rural community
- 9% fluent in Spanish and spoke Spanish with patients
- 46% have a PA master's degree
- 38% graduated from a physician assistant program in Colorado
- 43% provide primary care 50% or more of their time
- 11% practice in a rural area in their principal PA position
- 61% of physician assistants working full-time (>32 hrs/wk) earn more than \$80,000 per year

SOURCE: 2011 COLORADO PA WORKFORCE SURVEY, COLORADO HEALTH INSTITUTE

How is a Physician Assistant educated and trained?

- Physician assistants are trained in rigorous educational programs
- Average length of a physician assistant education program is 27 months
- Admission is highly competitive (ratios of 20 applicants to 1 position are not uncommon)
- Applicants must complete a Bachelor's degree and prerequisite science courses as required by each program
- Physician assistant education includes instruction in basic and clinical sciences: anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, pharmacology, physical diagnosis, pathophysiology, microbiology, clinical medicine, clinical laboratory science, behavioral science and medical ethics
- The clinical instruction phase of training takes place in ambulatory clinics, hospitals, physician offices and acute or long-term care facilities



University of Colorado
Anschutz Medical Campus
Child Health Associate/
Physician Assistant Program
School of Medicine



Colorado Academy
of Physician Assistants

