



## About PAs

*“PAs are nationally certified and state licensed medical professionals who practice medicine and are found in every medical and surgical specialty and setting.”*

## What do PAs do?

- PAs practice medicine.
- PAs are found in every medical and surgical specialty and setting.
- PAs manage the full scope of patient care.
- PAs conduct physical exams, diagnose and treat illnesses, order and interpret tests, assist in surgery, coordinate care, counsel on preventive healthcare, prescribe medications and more.

## How do PAs work?

- PAs are members of the healthcare team.
- PAs practice medicine in teams with physicians and other healthcare professionals.

## Preferred Definition

- PAs are nationally certified and state licensed to practice medicine.
- PAs are educated at the graduate level, often side-by-side with physicians, and practice in every medical and surgical subspecialty and setting.
- PAs have to recertify every 10 years and complete 100 hours of continuing medical education every two years.

## Preferred Phrases to Use

### PAs:

- “practice medicine”
- “practice medicine as part of the healthcare team”
- “collaborate with physicians” and “work in concert with physicians”
- “deliver patient-centric care”

### Notes:

1. We use PA as the title of the profession. We do not use “physician assistant” any longer to refer to the profession as the name does not adequately depict the medical services PAs provide to patients every day.
2. There will be times when it is to the profession’s benefit to underscore the value “shared decision making” brings to the patient. (e.g., two pairs of eyes, meticulous follow up.) Use accordingly.

## Phrases to Avoid

- **“physician-led”** – Rationale: It is no longer the case that physicians have to be the helm of the team. Patient-centered medical homes allow for many members of the healthcare team to coordinate the care.
- **“supervised”** – Rationale: We do not need or want to promote this concept except where required in legal documentation and context.

- **“mid-level provider,” “physician extender,” “nonphysician practitioner” or “advanced practice provider” –**

Context: It is important to not lump different types of providers together and these terms are particularly derogatory with regard to PA education and experience.

### **What is a PA?**

A PA is a medical professional who is nationally certified and state-licensed to practice medicine. All PAs are graduates of an accredited PA educational program. PAs are licensed to practice and authorized to prescribe medication in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and all U.S. territories with the exception of Puerto Rico. They practice medicine in all settings and specialties. In light of a projected provider shortage—estimated at 90,000 physicians by 2020, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges—America's approximately 104,000 PAs have the training, flexibility and agility to respond immediately to the demands placed on the U.S. healthcare system.

### **What can PAs do?**

PAs' responsibilities depend on state laws, practice setting, their experience and the scope of practice of the physicians on their healthcare teams. PAs obtain medical histories, conduct physical examinations, diagnose and treat illnesses, prescribe medication, order and interpret lab tests, perform procedures, assist in surgery, provide patient education and counseling and make rounds in hospitals and nursing homes. Yet this is not a comprehensive list of how PAs practice by any means.