

HISTORY OF THE PROFESSION

Definition

Physician Assistants (PAs) 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. PAs diagnose illness, develop and manage treatment plans, prescribe medications, and often serve as a patient's principal healthcare provider. With thousands of hours of medical training, PAs are versatile and collaborative. PAs practice in every state and in every medical setting and specialty, improving healthcare access and quality. The scope of a PA's practice is determined by state law, the PA's education, experience, and the specialty and setting in which the PA practices.

(adapted from AAPA: <https://www.aapa.org/what-is-a-pa/>)

History

www.pahx.org (<http://www.pahx.org>)

In the mid-1960s, physicians and educators recognized a shortage of primary-care physicians. Eugene A. Stead Jr., MD, of the Duke University Medical Center put together the first class of physician assistants in 1965 to answer this need. He selected Navy corpsmen who had received considerable medical training during their military service to be the inaugural PA students. Stead mirrored the curriculum of the PA program on the fast-track training of doctors during World War II. The first PA class graduated from the Duke University PA program on Oct. 6, 1967.

The PA concept was lauded as a creative solution to physician shortages and gained acceptance and federal backing as early as the 1970s. The medical community supported the new profession and spurred setting accreditation standards, establishing a national certification with a standardized examination, and developing continuing medical education requirements. Today, PAs are one of the fastest-growing occupations on the front lines of healthcare. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that the profession will increase 31 percent from 2020 to 2030, significantly faster than the average for all occupations. The demand for PAs is so high that three quarters of PAs receive multiple job offers upon graduation. (AAPA, 2022).