



## Physician Assistants/Associates Spotlight

“In the 2020 ranking of best health care jobs, the *U.S. News & World Report* ranked [physician assistant](#) (PA) second, and third in best jobs overall. Physician assistants are medical providers who are licensed to diagnose and treat diseases, prescribe medications for patients, and are required to work in the various clinical settings in collaboration with a licensed physician.” Because these PA/medical providers can work independently in a practice while consulting with their physician partners, in some states they are starting to refer to PAs as Physician Associates, which more accurately reflects the PA-Physician working relationship. PAs have advanced education in general medicine, modeled after medical school education, PAs can treat patients with significant autonomy. In a primary care setting, physician assistants can provide nearly all the clinical services a primary care physician does. The starting annual salary for PAs is between 100,000-120,000, depending on the location in the U.S.” Go to [Explore Health Careers.org](#) for more information. For general information or to see the PA Programs Directory go to the [PA Education Association](#) site.

“As the demand for healthcare services grows, physician assistants will be essential to lessen this gap in available patient care providers. Moreover, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the employment of physician assistants is projected to grow 31 percent between 2019 and 2029, which is a much more rapid growth compared to other occupations.”

Another advantage to pursuing a PA is the shorter educational timeline. Please examine this comparison of the educational timeline between Medicine and PA programs starting with an undergraduate degree. The academic/clinical preparation for MEDICINE is 3-4 years of undergrad coursework, 4 years of medical education/training, and approximately 4-9 years of residency depending on the specialty and sub-specialties, for a total of 11-12 years. The academic/clinical preparation for PA PROGRAMS is 3-4 years of undergrad, 2-3 years of medical education/training for a total 5-7 years. No residency is required, and PAs can re-train as they work and switch from one medical specialty practice to another. For example, a recent PA grad may start with a pediatric group, and after 3 years do general surgery in a hospital, and from there join an OB/Gyn group and serve as a provider with that patient population. This flexibility is highly attractive to practicing physician assistants/associates.

References: [ExploreHealthCareers.org](#), [PA Education Association](#) , [American Academy of Physician Assistants](#)