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# Physician Associate

## Patient Information



## What are the Benefits of Physician Associates?

PAs provide continuity of care in an ever-changing medical team. Continuity of care is well recognised to result in better health outcomes and higher patient satisfaction. (6)

An increased number of clinicians in the medical workforce leads to reduced waiting times and the likelihood of cancelled appointments, reduced discharge delays, and greater clinic appointment availability. PAs increase overall service efficiency and productivity. (7)



PAs have been working in the UK since 2003, and are well-established internationally. When seen by a PA, a PA should introduce themselves by name and role at the start of any encounter and should be wearing identification with their name and profession. PAs work across the NHS within both primary and secondary care.

## Which Qualifications do Physician Associates Have?

PA training is a 2 year intensive postgraduate course, this can be a diploma, but most often a master's degree. To apply students must have a bachelors degree, usually in life science or health, or, in some specific cases, have had a wealth of relevant healthcare experience and a previous degree.

More recently, a PA can take a 4 year Physician Associate studies undergraduate course. All courses includes a minimum of 1600 hours of clinical placements rotating around multiple specialties, including primary care.

To become a registered PA in the UK, an additional post qualification national exam and OSCE assessment must be passed.

The PA profession at present is voluntarily regulated. Voluntary registration on the PAMVR is recommended by the Royal College of Physicians. Regulation under the General Medical Council will commence at the end of 2024. (2)

Studies have shown PAs to be safe and effective, with high levels of patient satisfaction. (3) (4) (5)



## The Multidisciplinary Team

Multidisciplinary teams consist of individuals drawn from different disciplines and backgrounds who come together to work towards a common goal. When talking about clinicians, this could include doctors (from Foundation Year 1 to Consultants), Advanced Care Practitioners, Nurse Practitioners, Paramedic Practitioners, and Physician Associates (PAs).

Delivering optimal medical/surgical care requires a team effort. Having staff from varying backgrounds increases the breadth of skills and knowledge among the team.

## What is a Physician Associate?

A PA is a clinician who, while not a doctor, works to a medical model, with the attitudes, skills, and knowledge base to deliver holistic care and treatment within the medical team under defined levels of supervision. (1)

PAs can take medical histories, perform examinations and procedures, and formulate treatment plans. They cannot prescribe medication or request CT scans or X-rays. A PA, like all junior clinicians, will be under the supervision of a named consultant or GP.

