



HEALTH CARE OPTIONS GUIDE

for internationally educated health professionals

Physician Assistant or PA

This profession is also known as:

- clinical assistant

What is a physician assistant?

PAs are medically educated clinicians who practice medicine within a formalized agreement with physician(s). Their Scope of Practice is defined by the formalized agreement with the Physician(s) based on their qualifications, experience and knowledge and the laws of the jurisdiction of practice.



What are the main duties of a physician assistant?

The PA has the knowledge, skills and experience to deal with health care and medical needs in a variety of practice environments. The PA may:

- conduct patient interviews, histories, physical examinations;
- perform selected diagnostic and therapeutic interventions;
- provide medical orders and prescriptions
- counsel on preventive health care

The individual relationship between the PA and the supervising physician becomes the essential determinant of each PA's individual clinical role, within the context of the PA's competencies and the PA scope of practice.

What personal characteristics or desired traits do I need for this profession?

You must demonstrate:

- Emotional stability
- Orientation to detail
- Confidence to work well independently and as part of a team
- compassion
- strong problem-solving skills
- adaptability
- Strong interpersonal skills
- Willingness for undertake hard-work

Where do physician assistants work?

PAs are employed by

- hospitals
- physicians
- private groups
- regional health authorities



What typical work conditions should I expect?

Your work schedule may vary according to the practice setting and often will depend on the hours of the supervising physician.

- The workweek of hospital-based PA's may include weekends, nights, or early morning hospital rounds to visit patients. These workers also may be on call.
- PA's in clinics, on average, work a 40-hour week

What qualifications do I need for this work?

Physician assistants require completion of a university degree in a physician assistant program

What communication skills do I need for this work?

Interpersonal and communication skills include verbal, nonverbal, and written exchange of information. Physician assistants must demonstrate interpersonal and communication skills that result in effective information exchange with patients, their patients' families, physicians, professional associates, and the health care system. Physician assistants are expected to:

- Create and sustain a therapeutic and ethically sound relationship with patients
- Use effective listening, nonverbal, explanatory, questioning, and writing skills to elicit and provide information
- Appropriately adapt communication style and messages to the context of the individual patient interaction.
- Work effectively with physician and other health care professionals as a member or leader of a health care team or other professional group
- Apply an understanding of human behavior
- Demonstrate emotional resilience and stability, adaptability, flexibility, and tolerance of ambiguity and anxiety
- Accurately and adequately document and record information regarding the care process for medical, legal, quality, and financial purposes.

To learn more about essential skills important to Canadian employers, view

http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/es_search-eng.do?titleKeyword=Physician+Assistant&source=2&modify=Go%21

What wage can I expect for this work?

Typical Canadian hourly wage **Low** 12.00 **Median** 17.50 **High** 26.06

Are there opportunities for advancement?

There are no opportunities for advancement without further training.

Learn more about physician assistants by viewing these sites.

National Occupation Code 3124

The government of Canada has given a code to each occupation/profession. Use this code to learn more about physician assistant.

<http://www5.hrsdc.gc.ca/NOC/English/NOC/2011/ProfileQuickSearch.aspx?val=3&val1=3124>

Currently, the Alberta Clinical and Clinical/Surgical Assistant Program (ACSAP) provides International Medical Graduates (IMGs) with an alternate career path to become Clinical and Clinical/Surgical Assistants. ACSAP programs put candidates through a six-month assessment and evaluation that, upon successful completion, can lead to a full-time and permanent acute care coverage role that addresses clinical and/or surgical coverage shortages.

References

- Outline from CSMLS webpage, accessed 3/25/2016
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- Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC)
<http://cicic.ca/>
- Canadian Association of Physician Assistants, CanMeds-PA, 2015 Edition
<http://capa-acam.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/CanMEDS-PA.pdf>
- CanMEDS 2015, Physician Competency Framework
http://canmeds.royalcollege.ca/uploads/en/framework/CanMEDS%202015%20Framework_EN_Reduced.pdf