



What is the Physician Assistant's Role in Healthcare Today?

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A Physician Assistant (PA) is a nationally certified and state licensed medical professional. PA's practice medicine on healthcare teams with physicians and other providers. They practice and prescribe medication in all 50 states, the military, and even in several foreign countries.

PA's obtain medical histories, perform examinations and procedures, order treatments, diagnose disease, and assist in surgery. PA's can work in all medical specialties. There are over 80,000 PA's practicing in the United States. There are 18 PA's working for Rutland Regional Medical Center and over 300 working in the state of Vermont.

How are Physician Assistants trained?

PA training consists of attending a PA program that is usually 3 years long. Most PA's graduate with a Master's Degree. The first PA program in Vermont, at The College of St. Joseph in Rutland, is starting its first class in June of 2016.

Before PA's can practice they must:

- Pass the Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam
- Get licensed by the state they wish to practice in

In order to maintain certification, PA's must:

- Complete a recertification exam every 10 years
- Complete 100 hours of continuing medical education (CME) every 2 years

The PA-C after a PA's name means that they are currently certified.

What does the future hold for PA's?

Jobs for PA's are projected to grow 38% over the next 10 years, much faster than the average for all occupations. Increased demand for healthcare services due to the aging population and a shortage of physicians are responsible for the growing need for PA's. For more information about the PA profession, go to www.aapa.org.