By choosing to become a Physician Assistant (PA), you are entering one of the fastest growing and most highly regarded professions in the country. US News & World Report recently ranked Physician Assistant as a “Top Career” in its Career Guide 2009 rankings. The ranking took into consideration important factors such as job satisfaction, training difficulty, prestige, job market outlook, and salary to determine the best careers offering outstanding opportunities. In addition, the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) has consistently ranked the PA profession as one of the 30 fastest-growing occupations in the country and currently ranks it fourth among health professions. In the same BLS ranking time period (2008-2018), it is projected that the number of PA jobs will increase by 39 percent. There are currently over 63,000 PAs in clinical practice.

About the PA Profession

Physician Assistants are licensed to practice medicine with physician supervision. Within the physician/PA relationship, PAs exercise autonomy in medical decision-making and provide a broad range of diagnostic and therapeutic services. As part of their comprehensive responsibilities, PAs conduct physical exams, diagnose and treat illnesses, order and interpret tests, counsel on preventive health care, assist in surgery, and write prescriptions. PAs are trained primarily in primary care but are found in all areas of medicine. They practice in family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, as well as in specialty fields such as cardiovascular surgery, orthopedics, and emergency medicine.

Physician Assistants earn a very competitive salary. The most recent American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) PA Census Survey from 2009 indicates the average salary for a physician assistant is $93,105.

Physician Assistants enjoy high levels of job satisfaction. According to the AAPA’s 2003 Market Research Survey of Clinically Practicing PAs, 86 percent of PAs indicated they would choose the profession again if they were choosing a career today. Moreover, more than two-thirds of respondents would be “very likely” to recommend the PA profession to promising students. This is certainly strong testimony to the bright future of the physician assistant profession.

Ted Ruback, MS, PA-C, Division Head and Program Director, celebrates with PA Program faculty, staff and students at the OHSU Commencement.

www.ohsu.edu/pa
The Oregon Health & Science University Physician Assistant Program is a 26-month, full-time course of study leading to a Master of Physician Assistant Studies degree. The program annually accepts a class of 38 students and is fully accredited by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA). The curriculum is composed of a 12-month didactic phase and a 14-month clinical phase.

Throughout the academic year, students enjoy highly integrated courses including gross anatomy with cadaver lab, physiology, clinical medicine, foundations in medical science, principles of professional practice, applied clinical skills, medical Spanish, and a clinical practicum working with a PA or physician.

During the clinical year, students participate in clinical training activities in a variety of community-based settings. A majority of the clinical opportunities are provided in rural and urban medically underserved sites throughout Oregon, Southwest Washington, and Western Idaho. Students take part in five-week rotations in areas such as community medicine, pediatrics, women’s health, emergency medicine, general surgery and inpatient medicine, and have the opportunity to select up to two elective rotations. The remainder of the clinical year is devoted to an extended preceptorship in primary care. Students also complete a community outreach project involving a health promotion/disease prevention topic of interest presented to a community group.

Upon successful completion of the 26-month curriculum, graduates are then eligible to take the Physician Assistant National Certification Exam (PANCE), required prior to licensure as a PA.

Prerequisite Overview

The OHSU PA Program requires a bachelor’s degree, specific prerequisite courses, health care experience, and the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) to be considered for entry into the program. The admissions process is highly competitive. The Program participates in the Central Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA) for submission of applications. Prospective students are encouraged to review the prerequisite information and admissions process detailed on the Program’s web page.

Physician Assistant Faculty

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