Pre-Health Advisor Workshop

What is a

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT?

NURSE PRACTITIONER?

Welcome!!

Mark P. Christiansen, PhD, PA–C

Program Director
FNP/PA Program
UC – Davis Medical Center
Sacramento, CA
What is a Physician Assistant?

- Physician assistants are:
  - Highly trained healthcare professionals
  - Authorized by a state to practice medicine
  - Part of healthcare team with physicians and others

What is the PA Role?

- Deliver a broad range of medical and surgical services, including:
  - Conduct physical exams
  - Obtain medical histories
  - Diagnose and treat illnesses
  - Order and interpret tests
  - Counsel on preventive health care
  - Assist in surgery
  - Prescribe medications
How Do I Become a PA?

- There are several steps a person must take in order to become a PA.
- An applicant to a PA program must complete at least two years of college courses in basic science and behavioral science as prerequisites to PA training.
  - Most PA students have earned a bachelor’s degree
  - Many have advanced degrees
  - On average, students have three years of health care experience before entering a PA program.

How Do I Become a PA?

- A prospective PA must complete his or her education at an accredited PA program.
  - Accreditation is granted by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC–PA).
  - PA programs are approximately 27 months long and include classroom and clinical instruction.
  - Based on the Medical Model
Before a PA can practice, he or she must pass the **Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam**.

- Administered by the National Commission of the Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA).
- Only graduates from accredited PA programs are eligible to take the PANCE.

When a prospective PA passes the PANCE, then he or she can use the credentials “PA-C”, which stands for “Physician Assistant-Certified.”

To maintain national certification, a PA must:
- Complete 100 hours of continuing medical education every two years
- Pass the Physician Assistant National Recertifying Exam (PANRE) every six years.
How Do I Become a PA?

- Before a PA can begin practicing, he or she will also need to obtain authorization to practice in a state or a federally designated site (DoD, VA).
  - A PA must obtain licensing, registration or certification to practice through state licensing authorities.

What is the usual process to becoming a Physician Assistant?
Training: Pre-professional

- Prerequisites for application to the program
  - Bachelor’s Degree
    - Major may vary
    - Most applicants are science majors (biology, etc.)
  - Graduate Record Examination (GRE)
  - Health Care Experience – varied

Health Care Experience

- Direct Patient Contact
- Health Related Experience

Examples:
Training: Pre–professional

- Required Course Work
  (Varies by program)
  - Biology: 8 – 16 hours
  - Chemistry: 8 – 16 hours
  - Psychology: 3 – 9 hours
  - Mathematics: 3 hours
    - Statistics
  - English – 6 hours
    - Including English Comp

Training – Pre–professional

- Electives
  - Additional sciences
  - Social Sciences
  - Humanities
Program Admissions

- Central Application Process
  - CASPA

The Admission Process

There are eight steps:

1. CASPA Application
2. GRE
3. Verification
4. Addendum
5. Evaluation
6. Interview
7. Final Selection
8. Admission Letter
Training: Professional

- 24 – 28 continuous months
  - Full time
  - Divided between didactic and clinical
- Medical Model
  - Educators/Role Models: Physicians, PAs
  - Education: Primary Care Focus

Training: Professional

- Phase I (didactic) = 12–15 months
  - Basic Medical Sciences
  - Pre-clinical Sciences
  - Professional Studies
Training: Professional

- Phase II (clinical) = 12–15 months
  - Clinical Education
    - Full-time clerkships
    - 1,800–2,400 hours of supervised clinical experience

Clinical Education

- Required Clerkships
  - Family Medicine
  - General Internal Medicine
  - Pediatrics
  - Obstetrics & Gynecology
  - General Surgery
  - Emergency Medicine
  - Geriatrics
  - Psychiatry
Training: Professional

- Elective Clerkships
  - Primary Care Elective
  - Internal Medicine Elective
  - Other Electives
    - Surgical specialties
    - Medicine specialties
    - Primary care
    - Other
      - International

Nurse Practitioners & Physician Assistants

- Compare and Contrast

- Background, Training, Role, Licensure, Supervision, Scope of Practice
The Nursing Pyramid

- Scholar
- Specialist: CNS, NP, CRNA, CNM
- Professional
- Technical

Advanced Practice Nursing

- CRNA – certified registered nurse anesthetist
- CNM – certified nurse midwife
- CNS – clinical nurse specialist
- NP – nurse practitioner
**Student Pool – NPs**

- BSN nurses
  - Varying levels of experience
  - Primary care or specialty focus

**Student Pool – PAs**

- More heterogeneous group
  - Varying experiences
  - Wide range of backgrounds
    - Traditional student with limited medical experience
    - Non-traditional students
      - Varying medical experience
      - Experience other than medical – life experience
Nurse Practitioner Education
– Nursing Model –

- Master’s Core:
  - theory
  - health care system
  - research

- NP Core:
  - pharmacology
  - pathophysiology
  - advanced assessment

- Focused in area of concentration
  - health promotion
  - management of illness within scope of practice
    (acute minor and stable chronic)

- Clinical Education
  - clinical preceptorships
  - 600+ hours of applied clinical experience
  - typically all, or most, at one site
Nurse Practitioner Education

- Educators and Role Models
  - Nurse Practitioners
  - Nursing Educators

PA Training: Professional Medical Model

- 24–28 continuous months
  - Full time
- Medical Model
  - Educators/Role Models: Physicians, PAs
  - Education: Primary Care Focus
Gold Standard of profession

- Nurse Practitioners
  - Degrees
    - Master’s level
    - Moving to doctoral level (DNP)
  - National certifying exam in specialty area

Gold Standard of profession

- Physician Assistants
  - Competency Based Practice
  - Degrees vary – Bachelors, Masters, Certificate
    - Most PA programs are Master’s level
    - Or moving toward Master’s level
  - General certifying exam
    - Same for all PAs regardless of degree or specialty
Types of Nurse Practitioners

- By area of specialization –
  - Psychiatric
  - Family
  - Acute care
  - Gero
- By ages –
  - Adult
  - Pediatric
  - Neonatal
  - Geriatric
- By gender –
  - Women’s health

Scope of practice
- Varies by state and specialty
  - Pediatric NP – children up to 20 y.o.
  - Adult do not see patients under 16
- Evaluate, Diagnosis, Manage both Acute and Chronic Illness, Order and Interpret Diagnostic tests.
- Health promotion – Health Maintenance
Credentialing

- **Certification:**
  - National certification exam in area of specialty
  - Must Recertify every 5 years by combination of hours worked, CE, and Mentoring hours or take test

- **Licensure**
  - Most nurse practitioners have a second nursing license (ARNP)
  - DEA Numbers

Nurse Practitioner Role

- High number of NP’s work in Primary care
- Some work with vulnerable and underserved people
  - Innovative ways to provide care to this population
- Nurse Managed Clinics throughout the country
  - Rural
  - Homeless
  - Indigent
SCOPES OF PRACTICE – PAs

- Physician directed Health Care Team
  - PAs practice as agent of M.D. or D.O.
  - Delegated or Negotiated practice

PA SCOPE OF PRACTICE

- SUPERVISION
  - Dependent or Delegated practice
    - Primary Supervising Physician
    - Alternate supervisors
  - Practice setting licensed by state
  - Hospital – Subject to Hospital Bylaws
SCOPE OF PRACTICE

- Practice Specialties
  - Primary Care
    - Family Medicine
    - Internal medicine
    - Pediatrics
  - Medical and Surgical Specialties

Key Reasons to Consider a Career as a PA or NP

- Direct patient management / problem-solving
- Shorter training period; start practice earlier
- Rapidly growing profession – many opportunities
- High degree of job satisfaction
- Flexibility to choose and change specialties
- Better able to balance career and family life