

## Physician Assistant Program Competencies

### Competency 1: Medical Knowledge

Medical knowledge includes the synthesis of pathophysiology and patient presentation, including epidemiology, signs and symptoms, medical interviewing, physical assessment, diagnostics, differential diagnosis, pharmacologic and non-pharmacologic intervention, health promotion, and disease prevention. Physician assistant students must demonstrate core knowledge about established and evolving biomedical and clinical sciences and the application of this knowledge to patient care.

Physician Assistant students are expected to demonstrate an investigative and analytic thinking approach to clinical situations by being able to:

- 1.1 Utilize scientific principles related to patient care to differentiate between normal and abnormal anatomic, physiological, laboratory findings, and other diagnostic data.
- 1.2 Analyze etiologies, risk factors, underlying pathologic process, and epidemiology for medical/surgical conditions.
- 1.3 Interpret the clinical features, differential diagnosis, and management of common acute and chronic medical and/or surgical conditions seen in outpatient and inpatient settings.
- 1.4 Select and interpret appropriate diagnostic studies.
- 1.5 Manage common medical and surgical conditions integrating knowledge about the indications, contraindications, side effects, interactions and adverse reactions of pharmacologic agents and other relevant treatment modalities.
- 1.6 Determine interventions for preventive care and health promotion/maintenance screening methods to detect conditions in an asymptomatic individual.
- 1.7 Analyze and synthesize history and physical findings and diagnostic studies to formulate differential diagnoses.
- 1.8 Recognize signs and symptoms of serious and emergent medical/surgical conditions.
- 1.9 Utilize evidence-based practice.

### Competency 2: Interpersonal Skills

Interpersonal and communication skills encompass the verbal, nonverbal, written, and electronic exchange of information. Physician assistant students must demonstrate interpersonal and communication skills that result in effective information exchange with patients, patients' families, physicians, and members of the healthcare team.

Physician Assistant students are expected to:

- 2.1 Present cases in a patient-centered manner, integrating further testing recommendations, differential diagnosis, most likely diagnosis, and evidence-based treatment recommendations as indicated.
- 2.2 Establish and sustain therapeutic and ethically sound interactions with patients.
- 2.3 Use effective communication skills to elicit and provide information in a respectful, non-judgmental, inclusive manner, demonstrating respect for and understanding of the diverse patient population.
- 2.4 Communicate and collaborate effectively with physicians and other healthcare team members.
- 2.5 Demonstrate emotional resilience and stability, adaptability, flexibility, and tolerance of ambiguity and anxiety.
- 2.6 Demonstrate competent documentation of information regarding care for medical, legal, quality, and financial purposes.

### **Competency 3: Clinical and Technical Skills, Clinical Reasoning and Problem-Solving**

Patient care includes patient and setting-specific assessment, evaluation, and management. Physician Assistant students must demonstrate care that is effective, safe, high quality, and equitable. Physician Assistant students must obtain a relevant medical history, adequately perform physical examinations, and implement treatment plans on patients across the lifespan, appropriate to the patient's condition. In addition, Physician Assistant students must demonstrate proficiency in clinical/technical skills and healthcare that is effective, patient-centered, safe, compassionate, and culturally appropriate for the treatment of medical problems and the promotion of health.

Physician Assistant students are expected to:

- 3.1 Work effectively with physicians and other health care professionals to provide patient-centered care.
- 3.2 Demonstrate compassionate and respectful behaviors when interacting with patients and their families.
- 3.3 Gather essential and accurate information about their patients.
- 3.4 Formulate informed decisions about diagnostic and therapeutic interventions based on patient information and preferences, up-to-date scientific evidence, and informed clinical judgment.
- 3.5 Utilize clinical reasoning and problem-solving skills to develop and implement patient management plans.
- 3.6 Counsel and educate patients and their families.
- 3.7 Safely and competently perform medical and surgical clinical/technical skills considered essential to the area of practice.
- 3.8 Provide healthcare services and education aimed at preventive care and health promotion/maintenance.

3.9 Use information technology to support patient care decisions and patient education.

## Competency 4: Professional Behaviors

Professionalism is the expression of positive values and ideals as care is delivered. Foremost, it involves prioritizing the interests of those being served above one's own. Physician Assistant students must acknowledge their professional and personal limitations. Professionalism also requires that PAs practice without impairment from substance abuse, cognitive deficiency or mental illness. Physician Assistant students must demonstrate a high level of responsibility, ethical practice, sensitivity to a diverse patient population, and adherence to legal and regulatory requirements.

Physician Assistant students are expected to demonstrate:

- 4.1 Describe legal and regulatory requirements of the role of the physician assistant.
- 4.2 Professional relationships with physician supervisors and all health care team members.
- 4.3 Respect, compassion, and integrity, and accountability to the health needs of patients and always act in the best interest of patients.
- 4.4 Commitment to excellence and on-going professional development.
- 4.5 Commitment to ethical principles pertaining to provision or withholding of clinical care, confidentiality of patient information, and informed consent.
- 4.6 Sensitivity and responsiveness to patients' culture, age, gender, and abilities and the relationship to health and health beliefs.
- 4.7 Self-reflection, critical curiosity, and initiative.
- 4.8 Act within the AAPA's Physician Assistant professional code as described in the "Code of Ethics of the PA Profession".

## Competency 5: Practice-based Learning & Improvement

Practice-based learning and improvement includes the processes through which Physician Assistants engage in critical analysis of their own practice experience, the medical literature, and other information resources for the purposes of self- and practice-improvement. Physician Assistant students must be able to assess, evaluate, and improve their patient care practices.

Physician Assistant students are expected to:

- 5.1 Locate, appraise, and evaluate evidence from medical/clinical literature related to their patients' healthcare.
- 5.2 Apply knowledge of study designs and statistical methods to the appraisal of clinical literature and other information on diagnostic and therapeutic effectiveness.

5.3 Utilize information technology to manage information, access medical information, and support the practice of life-long learning through self-assessed knowledge and behaviors.

*Adapted from AAPA, ARC-PA, PAEA, NCCPA (2012). Competencies for the Physician Assistant Profession.*