

EDUCATION

To discuss the underlying conflicts concerning physician assistants, it is necessary to understand the methods of PA programs. The PA profession is oriented towards providing primary care with a focus on health care prevention (Jacobson, 5). Physician assistants are educated according to a compressed version of the medical school model, often alongside medical students. Students are trained to be professionals, but professionals who function dependently on physicians (Jacobson, 8). During the minimum two year program, students complete didactic and complete clinical rotations in a wide variety of areas. The program also has prerequisites similar to those of medical schools: prerequisites in basic sciences, behavioral sciences, and some sort of exposure to the medical field. The majority of accredited programs require a minimum amount of logged hands-on patient care, thus making registered nurses, emergency medical technicians, and physical therapists prime candidates for a slot in PA programs. The behavioral science requirement reflects the PA orientation toward preventive medical medicine. Jacobson speculates that the orientation of PA programs toward hands-on patient care is directly connected with the fact that PAs tend to spend more time with patients (Jacobson, 5).