

Why are you charged the same fee for seeing a PA as when you see a doctor?

The medical service you receive is identical to that provided by the doctor. Michigan law requires that both doctors and PAs follow the local and national standards of medical care.

In addition, the doctor is always involved, as they are ultimately responsible for the PAs actions. This means that the doctor has given their time to supervising the PA in everything they do.

Why have PAs at all then?

Because their training costs about one fourth of physician training, allowing more schools to have more people graduating for less cost. Also, since the PAs salaries are about half that of doctors, health systems can use the savings to offer other services, like health education classes and assistance to lower income families.

Other sources of information:

The American Academy of Physician Assistants

905 North Washington Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-1552
703-836-2272

FastFax 800-286-2272

Email aapa@aapa.org

Web site www.aapa.org

Association of Physician Assistant Programs

905 North Washington Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-1552
703-836-2272

Web Site www.apap.org

National Commission on the Certification of Physician Assistants

Suite 800
157 Technology Parkway
Norcross, GA 30092-2913
770-399-9971

Web site nccpa.net

Michigan Academy of Physician Assistants

120 West Saginaw
East Lansing, MI 48823
517-336-1498

Toll-free 887-yes-MAPA

email mapa@msms.org

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The Physician Assistant

Your
Partner
in
Health

What is a Physician Assistant?

Physician Assistants are health care providers licensed to practice medicine with physician supervision. In Michigan, supervision means the doctor sets the guidelines for how the PA will treat patients, and is available, in person or by phone, for questions or problems.

What can PAs do?

Diagnosis and treat illnesses and injuries, physicals, order and interpret tests, counsel patients, assist in surgery, and write prescriptions. In short, they can do whatever their supervising doctor can do within the guidelines set by the doctor.

Where are PAs found?

PAs can see patients in hospitals, clinics, doctor's offices, and patient's homes. Over half of all PAs are in "primary care": family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, and obstetrics and gynecology.

What kind of training do PAs receive?

PA programs are 24 to 28 months in length, with about half awarding a Master's degree on completion. Such programs are modeled after a 'fast track' medical school program first proposed during World War II, and so compress the basic subjects and training required of doctors into a shorter time.

Classroom instruction includes biochemistry, nutrition, anatomy, physiology, microbiology, pharmacology, medicine, surgery, geriatric and home health care, disease prevention, ethics, and increasingly, alternative medicine.

More than a full year is devoted to clinical training in family practice, surgery, pediatrics, psychology/psychiatry, obstetrics and gynecology.

More than half of PA programs also require an original paper on clinical medicine, or a study of a certain question in medicine.

Are PAs new to medicine?

No, there have been training programs for PAs since 1970. In Michigan, the first two programs started in 1972, with three more programs starting in 1996.

There are now over 35,000 PAs nationwide, and over 1,400 in Michigan.

How do I know a PA is competent?

PAs are required to be licensed in Michigan. This now requires graduation from an approved PA program, having no criminal record, and passing the National PA Certifying Exam.

The National PA certifying exam must be taken and passed after graduation from an approved program. It is modeled after a test required for doctors to practice, and about 10 per cent fail to pass the exam each year.

In addition, PAs must attend 100 hours of Continuing Medical Education every two years, and pass a Recertifying Exam every six years.