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1. What made you first interested in becoming a PA?

- I was planning on going either to med school or physical therapy school. I did internships in college for both. I didn't like either. One day, my pediatrician called me and said he talked to his PA about me and set up an interview. After talking with that PA, I was hooked. It struck me as the perfect niche in medicine. You're basically a doctor, but have more freedom to pick and choose a specialty.

2. What training or education is required?

- 4 years of college — have to be at the top or near the top of your class to compete for openings at PA programs (3.5+ GPA and several hundred hours of clinical or surgical experience such as shadowing or working in a premedical field).
- Successful scores on the GRE (this may change in the future to more of an MCAT model, but for now it's still just the GRE. Typically need to be in the 90th percentile to be competitive).
- 2.5 years of intense training at an accredited PA program. Nearly all programs are master's degrees. A couple are doctorate programs, but these are rare. Many programs may move to doctorate level programs in the future as the profession continues to advance, but we'll see. Usually each PA program is between 115 and 122 credit hours (by comparison a doctorate in education is 44 hours... Med school is 144 hours... your college degree is 120 hours....it's very fast paced and you basically cram 4 years of med school into 2 years).
- Most programs are set up for 1.5 years of classroom education followed by 1 year of clinical rotations (like mini residencies).

3. How did you get this position? What are common career paths?

- Most PAs enter into clinical practice (surgery, family medicine, pediatrics, internal medicine, endocrinology, etc...).
- Very few PAs enter directly into administration or education
- Even fewer PAs do bridge programs with med schools for Ph.Ds.

4. What does a typical day at work look like for you?

- I have three main responsibilities in my surgical job
 - Rounding on all my patients who are spread out between 3 hospitals. This is usually done on my own while my doctor is in clinic or sleeping

- in or starting surgery. I order tests, medicines, plan discharges, write all types of orders, sometimes have to do life saving CPR, etc...
 - Assisting in surgery. This entails pre-operative care of all my patients, operation skills such as incisions, positioning, proper sterile technique, and most importantly closing all incisions, and finally post-operative care (see “Rounding” above).
 - My last job duty is clinic. I see about 20-25 patients on my own each clinic day (usually 2.5 days/week, the other 2.5 I’m in surgery)
 - Our PAs also take first call — this is emergency room care from setting broken bones to admitting sick patients to performing small bedside procedures. We can do all of those things without a doctor present. It’s pretty cool.
 - Typically expect to work about 60-100 hours/week no matter what setting you’re in.
5. What personal qualities or abilities are important in being a successful PA?
- Have to be very smart (top of your class)
 - Have to be a very fast learner
 - Have to have highly developed social skills (talking to patients, handling tough situations, and communicating with nurses, staff, and of course your doctors)
6. What is the most rewarding aspect of your job?
- Treating patients with kindness and empathy
7. What are some of the positive/ negative aspects of working as a PA?
- Positive: get paid well (usually, this depends on the location you work and what field you’re in), help people, and you get to use your brain to solve tough problems and make diagnoses daily.
 - Negative: long hours, work weekends, patients are always sick and need you, doctors can sometimes look down on you.
8. What are some of the current big issues in the PA field?
- Maintaining autonomous status: Most PAs can write for really strong controlled meds. Currently in South Carolina, PAs have the ability to write any prescription a doctor can, only exception is the number of pills. We are working on changing that to make our prescription ability equal to MDs.
 - FORBES.com rates being a PA as the best job in the US. It pays well and is expected to grow exponentially as more people need healthcare and less people become doctors.
9. What areas of knowledge are most important for advancement in in the PA field?
- Science
 - Anatomy
 - Social Skills

- Common Sense

10. What advice would you give someone wishing to enter into the PA field after college?

- Be sure you can handle working hard and learning fast.
- Make sure you know what you're getting into (some people think a PA is like a nurse, it's not! Imagine going to the doctor when you were sick as a kid—you sat on the exam bed, got examined, the doctor said you're sick, and gave you medicine or advise... this is exactly what a PA does. Usually it's very difficult to tell any difference between a doctor and a PA).
- Don't have a selfish attitude. It's hard work being in medicine. Patients can be ungrateful, the days get long, and the doctors can be frustrating. Be humble and do your best.

11. What do you wish you had known before entering the PA field?

- How hard PA school was going to be. I thought I could breeze through, but it was really tough. I graduated with a 3.8 GPA (in psychology with biology minor) and had 98th percentile GRE score ... I was only average in PA school compared to my classmates. We are pretty slick.

12. What are the typical hiring procedures for PA's looking to enter the field?

- Apply for open jobs once you graduate, pass the national certifying board test (6 hour long 300 question PANCE test), and then interview.

13. Please tell me more about your organization and its purposes.

- aapa.org
- nccpa.net
- scapapartners.org

14. What do you enjoy most about working for this organization?

- Treating patients effectively