

## What is the current status of PAs in the United States?

There are currently 75,000 PAs practicing in the United States with two percent of them, or approximately 1500 PAs in the area of Ob/Gyn. Health reform pressures and rising medical costs have increased the demand for advance practice clinicians such as PAs to be part of the health care team. Both private and public researchers have extensively analyzed the quality of medical care provided by PAs. They conclude that PAs provide the same quality of medical care as a physician, handle approximately 80 percent of the patients in a general practice, and are able to do so at a lower cost to the health care system. PAs working with physicians are able to provide better access to health care services, especially in medically underserved areas. Studies also show that PAs reduce patient wait times, have more time for questions and counseling, and increase the level of patient understanding and compliance to medical treatment.



For more information on PAs in Ob/Gyn, visit the Web site for the Association of Physician Assistants in Ob/Gyn (APAOG): [www.paobgyn.org](http://www.paobgyn.org)

For more information on PAs, visit the Web site for the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA): [www.aapa.org](http://www.aapa.org)



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# Physician Assistants in Obstetrics & Gynecology



## What is a Physician Assistant (PA)?

PAs are health care professionals licensed to practice medicine with physician support. They are hired by the physician as an extender of the physician's own practice of care and thereby practice under the auspices of physician supervision. PA training is based on an abridged, fast-track medical school model and includes education in primary care medicine and its specialties as well as required clerkships in emergency medicine, family medicine, general surgery, internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics and psychiatry. Upon graduation, physician assistants take a national certification examination developed by the National Commission on Certification of PAs in conjunction with the National Board of Medical Examiners. To maintain their national certification, PAs must log 100 hours of continuing medical education every two years and pass a general medicine recertification exam every six years.



## What is the role of Physician Assistants in Ob/Gyn?

The work of PAs in Ob/Gyn is as diverse as the work of Ob/Gyn physicians. PAs are employed in the fields of family medicine, internal medicine, general obstetrics and gynecology, reproductive endocrinology and infertility, gynecology oncology, urogynecology and perinatology. Their scope of practice varies with training, experience, state laws and the scope and the needs of their supervising physician.

Responsibilities in the outpatient setting often include:

- Annual well-woman exams with disease prevention and health promotion
- Prenatal and postpartum care
- Contraceptive initiation and surveillance
- Management of menstrual irregularities, abnormal pap smears, STDs and menopausal problems
- Procedures such as IUD insertions, pessary fittings, colposcopies, endometrial biopsies and vulvar biopsies.

Responsibilities in the inpatient setting often include:

- Surgical first assist in gynecologic surgeries and cesarean deliveries
- Assist or perform vaginal deliveries
- Floor rounds
- Obstetrical triage
- Emergency department Ob/Gyn consultations

## Frequently Asked Questions Regarding PAs in Ob/Gyn

### 1. Can PAs deliver babies?

Yes. Most state laws do not specify restrictions on PAs from participating in obstetrical practices or deliveries. Thus, obstetrical deliveries may be incorporated into the PA scope of practice depending on hospital regulations and physician needs. There are, however, four states which have specific language in their bylaws relating to PAs and obstetrical care. Details can be obtained from the AAPA Web site listed at the end of the brochure.

### 2. Can PAs perform surgical procedures?

Yes. PAs can perform office procedures, minor out-patient surgeries and assist in any major obstetrical, gynecological and general surgical procedures.

### 3. Can PAs write prescriptions?

Yes. PAs can write prescriptions in all 50 states plus the District of Columbia and Guam.

### 4. How is a PA different from a nurse practitioner (NP)?

Both are considered advanced practice clinicians but PAs are trained in the medical model and NPs are trained in the nursing model. PAs generally have more surgical training experience, but either may assist in the operating room.

