Physician associate

Physician associates support doctors in the diagnosis and management of patients.

As a physician associate, you might work in a GP surgery or be based in a hospital, but wherever you work, you'll have direct contact with patients.

You'll be trained to perform a number of tasks.

Working life

You'll be a graduate who has undertaken post-graduate training and you'll work under the supervision of a doctor. You'll be trained to perform a number of day-to-day tasks including:

- taking medical histories from patients
- performing physical examinations
- diagnosing illnesses
- seeing patients with long-term chronic conditions
- performing diagnostic and therapeutic procedures
- analysing test results
- developing management plans
- provide health promotion and disease prevention advice for patients.

Most physician associates currently work in general practice, acute (internal) medicine and emergency medicine.

"I find it very rewarding when I've supported a patient with a mental illness and see them come out the other side feeling hopeful and stronger than they were." Andy King, physician associate at Mosborough Health Centre in Sheffield

Read Andy’s story in full

Want to learn more?

- Find out more about the entry requirements, skills and interests required to enter a career as a physician associate
Pay and conditions
Most jobs in the NHS are covered by the Agenda for Change (AfC) pay scales which cover all staff except doctors, dentists and the most senior managers. Physician associates will usually start on AfC band 7. Many posts are internships which can be band 6.

Staff in the NHS will usually work a standard 37.5 hours per week. They may work a shift pattern.

Terms and conditions of service can vary for employers outside the NHS.

Where the role can lead
With further training and/or experience, you may be able to develop your career further and apply for vacancies in areas such as further specialisation, management, research, or teaching.

Job market and vacancies
Training opportunities for physician associates are expected to increase by 220% in 2016/17. You can find the universities running the courses in the ‘Further information’ below. Information on the entry requirements is also available.

You can search for vacancies for trainee physician associates on the NHS Jobs website.

Volunteering is an excellent way of gaining experience (especially if you don’t have enough for a specific paid job you’re interested in) and also seeing whether you’re suited to a particular type of work. It’s also a great way to boost your confidence and you can give something back to the community!

Further information
For more information about the role of physician associate, contact:

- Faculty of Physician Associates (at the Royal College of Physicians)
- Faculty of Perioperative Care (at the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh)
- UK & Ireland Universities Board for Physician Associate Education

Other roles that may interest you

- General practice (GP)
- Physicians’ assistant - anaesthesia
- Acute internal medicine
- Advanced critical care practitioner

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