

"My job is to anaesthetise the patient, stay with them during surgery and take them to recovery afterwards"

Sarah feels very lucky to have joined such an interesting profession. Read her story about life as an anaesthesia associate.

Real-life story - Sarah Massey

Physicians' assistant (anaesthetics)

Employer or university

London North West Healthcare NHS Trust

Salary range

£40k-£50k

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How I got into the role

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I've always been interested in biology and studied biological sciences at university. I didn't have a clue what I wanted to do, but thought I would be good at working with people in a healthcare-related profession. I found a physicians' assistant (anaesthesia) training role after university and feel very lucky to have joined such an interesting profession. Team working suits me and I enjoy the daily interaction with patients and colleagues.

What I do

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I work across two hospital sites, with a total of 17 operating theatres. A full time working week is 37.5 hours.

In the morning I see all the patients listed for surgery, carry out a pre-assessment and create an anaesthetic plan for each patient. I work under the supervision of a consultant anaesthetist, and each patient and their plan is discussed and agreed.

My job is to anaesthetise the patient, stay with them during surgery and take them to recovery afterwards. Anaesthetics is all about [physiology](#) ^[1]. Some people assume our job is done once the patient is anaesthetised, but we work as a team to get the patients safely through surgery and stay with them until they are in recovery.

The best bits and challenges

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One of the things I found challenging at first was being confident when interacting with patients; it isn't easy asking them the personal questions about their medical history that are necessary for their care. But over time it gets easier and, on the whole, patients have a lot of trust in the NHS and understand we are there to help them.

Days can be long and tiring and I spend a lot of time on my feet, but it's an incredibly rewarding job.

Life outside work

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I enjoy running and play netball, both of which give me energy and motivation outside of work.

Lots of emotional things can happen at work – looking after patients with very serious medical conditions for example – so it's important to be aware of this and to be able to discuss things with colleagues confidentially so that I don't take issues home with me.

Career plans and top tips for others

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Over time I've developed new skills and am competent in a range of anaesthesia techniques including 'regional' anaesthesia and [ultrasound](#) ^[2]-guided techniques. I enjoy developing within the role and see myself staying in a clinical role.

Patient interaction is a very key part of this role and to be a physicians' assistant (anaesthesia) you must have an interest in patient care, alongside a good understanding of [physiology](#) ^[1]. It's a very hands-on job involving clinical skills like giving injections, airway management and patient monitoring and assessment, so good dexterity is very helpful.

In summary, physicians' assistants need to be caring, diligent and good team workers.

*The title of physicians' assistant (anaesthesia) changed to anaesthesia associate in July 2019.

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Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Physiology> [2]
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Ultrasound>