

TECHNICAL STANDARDS FOR PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES

1. Observation

Students must be able to observe demonstrations and conduct experiments in the basic sciences, including, but not limited to: physiologic and pharmacologic demonstrations in animals, microbiologic cultures, and microscopic studies of micro-organisms and tissues in normal and pathologic states. A student must be able to observe a patient accurately at a distance and close at hand, noting non-verbal as well as verbal signals. Specific vision-related requirements include, but are not limited to, the following abilities: skin, culture media, and dipstick tests; visualizing and discriminating findings on x-rays and other imaging tests; reading written and illustrated material; observing demonstrations in the classroom, including projected slides and overheads; discriminating numbers and patterns associated with diagnostic instruments and tests such as sphygmomanometers and electrocardiograms; using instruments competently, such as stethoscope, otoscope, ophthalmoscope, and microscope.

2. Communication

Students must be able to relate effectively with patients, conveying a sense of compassion and empathy. A student must be able to communicate clearly with and observe patients in order to elicit information, accurately describing changes in mood, activity and posture, and perceive verbal as well as non-verbal communications. Communication includes not only speech but also reading and writing. Professional education for physician assistants presents exceptional challenges in the volume and breadth of required reading and the necessity to impart information to others. Students must be able to communicate quickly, effectively and efficiently in oral and written English with all members of the health care team. Specific requirements include but are not limited to the following abilities: communicating rapidly and clearly with the medical team on rounds; eliciting a thorough history from patients; and communicating complex findings in appropriate terms to patient and to various members of the health care team (fellow students, physicians, nurse's aides, therapists, social workers, and others). Students must learn to recognize and promptly respond to emotional communications such as sadness, worry, agitation, and lack of comprehension of physician communication. Each student must be able to read and to record observations and plans legibly, efficiently and accurately in documents such as the patient record. Students must be able to prepare and communicate concise but complete summaries of individual encounters and complex, prolonged encounters, including hospitalizations. Students must be able to complete forms according to directions in a complete and timely fashion.

3. Sensory and Motor Coordination or Function

Students must have sufficient sensory and motor function to perform a physical examination utilizing palpation, auscultation, percussion, and other diagnostic maneuvers. In general, this requires sufficient exteroceptive sense (touch, pain and temperature), proprioceptive sense (position, pressure, movement, stereognosis and vibratory), and motor function. A student should be able to execute motor movements reasonably promptly to urgencies within the hospital, and must not hinder the ability of their co-workers to provide prompt care, measure angles and diameters of various body structures using tape measure and goniometer, measure blood pressure and pulse. A student should be able to learn to perform basic laboratory tests (urinalysis, complete blood count, etc.), and diagnostic and therapeutic procedures (phlebotomy, arterial blood gas drawings, lumbar puncture, arthrocentesis, etc.). Examples of such emergency treatment reasonably required of physician assistants include arriving quickly when called and initiating appropriate therapeutic procedures, administering intravenous medication, applying pressure to stop bleeding, opening obstructed airways, suturing uncomplicated wounds, and performing uncomplicated obstetrical maneuvers.

4. **Intellectual-Conceptual Integrative and Quantitative Abilities**

These abilities include measurement, calculation, reasoning, analysis, judgment, numerical recognition and synthesis. Problem solving, a critical skill demanded of physician assistants, requires all of these intellectual abilities, and must be performed quickly, especially in emergency situations. Students must be able to identify significant findings from history, physical examination, and laboratory data, provide a reasoned explanation for likely diagnoses, and prescribe medications and therapy, recalling and retaining information in an efficient and timely manner. The ability to incorporate new information from peers, teachers, and the medical literature in formulating diagnoses and plans is essential. Good judgment in patient assessment, diagnostic and therapeutic planning is essential; students must be able to identify and communicate the limits of their knowledge to others when appropriate. Student must be able to interpret graphs describing biologic relationships and do other similar modes of data analysis.

5. **Behavioral Attributes**

Empathy, integrity, honesty, concern for others, good interpersonal skills, interest and motivation are all personal qualities that are required. Students must possess the emotional health required for full use of their intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment, the prompt of all responsibilities attendant to the diagnosis and care of patients, and the development of mature, sensitive and effective relationships with patients. At times, this requires the ability to be aware of and appropriately react to one's own immediate emotional responses. For example, students must maintain a professional demeanor and organization in the face of long hours and personal fatigue, dissatisfied patients, and tired colleagues. Students must be able to develop professional relationships with patients, providing comfort and reassurance when appropriate while protecting patient confidentiality. Students must possess adequate endurance to tolerate physically taxing workloads and to function effectively under stress. All students are at times required to work for extended periods, occasionally with rotating shifts. Students must be able to adapt to changing environments, to display flexibility and to learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the clinical problems of many patients. Students are expected to accept appropriate suggestions and criticism and if necessary, respond by modification of behavior.