

The Role of Mid-Level Providers

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a PA and how are they different from an MD?
2. What is the educational background of a PA?
3. What conditions can an OC PA treat?
4. How is an OC PA different from a general PA?
5. Why did I get an appointment with a PA?

A Physician Assistant (PA) is a health care professional licensed to practice medicine with the supervision of a physician. The well rounded medical education of Physician Assistants provides a solid foundation from which to address the diverse aspects of orthopedic practice including; providing patient education, taking patient histories, performing physical exams, ordering and interpreting tests, diagnosing conditions, developing treatment plans, providing health counseling, prescribing medications, and assisting in surgery and post-operative care.

Healthcare providers who hold the title of Physician Assistant have met a defined course of study and have undergone testing by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA). The average Physician Assistant program curriculum is 26 months and is characterized by a rigorous, competency-based curriculum with both didactic and clinical components. After graduation, Physician Assistants are required to pass a national certification examination before they can practice. To maintain certification, Physician Assistants must complete 100 hours of continuing medical education every two years and take a recertification examination every six years.

OrthoCarolina Physician Assistants support every office location and routinely see patients in our seven specialty groups (foot & ankle, hand, hip & knee, pediatrics, shoulder & elbow, spine and sports medicine). As orthopedic specialists, OrthoCarolina Physician Assistants have the authority and expertise to diagnose and treat patients with a range of muscle, bone and joint conditions including:

- Arthritis
- ACL tears
- Broken bones & fractures
- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Cerebral palsy
- Claw toe
- Disc herniation
- Dislocations
- Heel pain
- Joint pain
- Nerve pain
- Osteoporosis
- Pediatric disorders
- Sprains
- Sports injuries
- Spinal stenosis
- Tendonitis
- Trauma

Think of a Physician Assistant as an extension of your physician. Physicians may choose to delegate certain medical tasks to their Physician Assistants and this flexibility allows OrthoCarolina to provide quality care more efficiently to members of the community. Patients are able to schedule appointments at their convenience and our clinical staff can provide the level of care and customer service that ensures patient satisfaction.

OrthoCarolina employs one of the largest groups of (private practice) Physician Assistants in the nation and recognizes them as valuable members of our medical team. By complementing the work of their supervising physicians, Physician Assistants keep OrthoCarolina responsive to the needs of patients and allow us to provide excellence in care and service, one patient at a time.