

Patient Care and Healthcare Experience for PA School

PA is different from most other health professions in that to be [competitive as an applicant](#) it often requires a very large number of hours of paid healthcare experience. But the question remains: **How many hours of healthcare related experience do you need to give yourself a competitive advantage along with a broad range of application options in the shortest amount of time?**

Healthcare Experience Requirements for PA School

Below is a table comparing the hours of healthcare experience required and type of healthcare experience requested by the majority of Physician Assistant Programs in the United States.

Here are some of the fields that are typically accepted by most programs:

- Military Corpsman
- EMT or paramedic
- Combat Medic
- Registered Nurse (RN), BSN, LPN
- EEG or EKG technician
- Emergency room technician
- Physical therapy aide
- Certified Nurse Aide (CNA)
- Medical Assistant (MA)
- Respiratory Therapist
- Dietician
- Phlebotomist
- International healthcare based mission trips
- Hospice
- Medical Technologist
- Licensed Practical Nurse
- Dental Hygienist OR Technologist
- X-Ray Technologist
- Physical/Occupational Therapist
- Medical Social Worker Mental
- Health Care Counselor
- Aide in Dialysis Unit
- Optometry Assistant
- Chiropractic Assistant

Here are some activities that are typically not accepted by most programs:

- Taking care of a family member is not really clinical experience. You can mention it and talk about the clinical care you provided, but it's not really what PA schools are looking for. (Although you should take care of your family)
- Observation of any kind (i.e., shadowing a physician or PA)
- Conducting research
- Helping in the health center at a summer camp
- Medical records personnel or clerical worker in a medical office or hospital
- Pharmacy technician/clerk
- Training without employment (such as EMT/MICT, etc.)
- Healthcare experience which is part of a healthcare training program (i.e., clinical rotations, field work, or internships)
- Providing first aid as a coach, scout leader, etc

Here are some activities that are highly variable:

- Medical Scribe is one of those very gray areas in that it provides exposure but is not always hands on. Many schools accept it and many don't.
- Working as a medical interpreter
- Volunteering
- Athletic trainer