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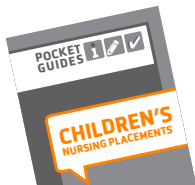
# **PHYSICIAN ASSOCIATE PLACEMENTS**

**Kate Straughton  
and Jeannie Watkins**

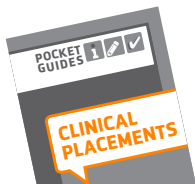
**POCKET  
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# **PHYSICIAN ASSOCIATE PLACEMENTS**



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GUIDES**



# PHYSICIAN ASSOCIATE PLACEMENTS

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The authors and publisher have made every attempt to ensure the content of this book is up to date and accurate. However, healthcare knowledge and information is changing all the time so the reader is advised to double-check any information in this text on drug usage, treatment procedures, the use of equipment, etc. to confirm that it complies with the latest safety recommendations, standards of practice and legislation, as well as local Trust policies and procedures. Students are advised to check with their tutor and/or practice supervisor before carrying out any of the procedures in this textbook.

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# Preface

We believe that PA students are strong, visible ambassadors who can help the NHS understand what a PA can do, and how PAs fit into the team. Hopefully, for PA students just starting your journey, this book will get you thinking about the importance of clinical placements, how vital it is to be prepared for placement, to participate when you are there, to optimise your time and learning opportunities (knowing what you can contribute and what you can get from the placement). This book should also enable you to reflect and learn from your experiences. We also hope that this handbook will make the clinical placement experience a little less scary and enable you to prepare for working life as a newly qualified PA.

**Kate Straughton**

**Jeannie Watkins**

# Acknowledgements

Having worked as Physician Associates in roles (clinical and academic) supporting PA students on their clinical placements for many years, we would like to extend a huge thank you to all the students we have worked with. Without you, your questions, concerns, ideas, challenges, and oodles of examples of brilliant practice, we would not have anything to say!

Thank you also to those colleagues (Tripti Chakraborty, Kay Ling, Wendi Heathcock, Ruth Berry and Dr Iram Khattak) and PA students (Gabriella Smith, Louis Menson Evans, Ealish Brew and Balraj Pandher) who have reviewed this book. Your constructive feedback – comments and suggestions based on your wide and varied experiences of clinical placements – was thoughtful, pragmatic and incredibly helpful. We are grateful for your contributions. Also, our thanks to the General Medical Council for permission to use the professional standards for medical healthcare professionals and students and apply those to PAs.

# Abbreviations

**Below you will find abbreviations used in this book. There is also space for you to create a list of further (approved) abbreviations that you encounter during placement.**

**Familiarise yourself with locally approved abbreviations in your first few days of placement.**

A&E	Accident and Emergency
ABC	Airway, breathing, circulation
ABG	Arterial blood gas
ACE	Angiotensin-converting enzyme
ACVPU	Alert, new Confusion, responds to Voice, responds to Pain, Unresponsive
ADLs	Activities of daily living
AHP	Allied Health Professional
ALs	Activities of living
ARDS	Acute respiratory distress syndrome
BLS	Basic life support
BP	Blood pressure
C. diff	<i>Clostridium difficile</i>
CA	Cancer
CD	Controlled drug
CHF	Chronic heart failure
COPD	Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
CPD	Continuing professional development
CPR	Cardiopulmonary resuscitation
CSU	Catheter specimen urine
CVA	Cerebrovascular accident (stroke)
DNAR	Do not attempt resuscitation
DOB	Date of birth
DOPS	Direct Observation of Procedural Skills

DVT	Deep vein thrombosis
ECG	Electrocardiogram
ED	Emergency department
ENT	Ear, nose and throat
ET	Endotracheal tube
GCS	Glasgow Coma Scale
GMC	General Medical Council
H <sub>2</sub> O	Water
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
HR	Heart rate
HTN	Hypertension
I&D	Incision and drainage
I&O	Intake and output
IBS	Irritable bowel syndrome
ICP	Intracranial pressure
ICU/ITU	Intensive care unit/intensive treatment unit
IM	Intramuscular
INH	Inhaled
IV	Intravenous
LOC	Level/loss of consciousness
MDT	Multidisciplinary team
MRSA	Methicillin-resistant <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>
MSU	Midstream urine specimen
NBM	Nil by mouth
NG	Nasogastric
NSAID	Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug
O	Oral
O <sub>2</sub>	Oxygen

PE	Pulmonary embolism
PGD	Patient Group Direction
PPE	Personal protective equipment
PR	Per rectum
PRN	As needed
PV	Per vagina
RBC	Red blood cell
SBARD	Situation, background, assessment, recommendation, decision
S/C	Subcutaneous
S/L	Sublingual
SOB	Shortness of breath
SPA	Suprapubic aspirate
TIA	Transient ischaemic attack
TOP	Topical <i>or</i> Termination of pregnancy
TPN	Total parenteral nutrition
TPR	Temperature, pulse, respiration
UA	Urinalysis
UTI	Urinary tract infection
VRE	Vancomycin-resistant <i>Enterococcus</i>
WBC	White blood cell



**Note your own (approved) abbreviations**

# Introduction

Physician Associate programmes are designed to deliver medical knowledge and skills over a minimum of 90 weeks, preparing students for entry into professional practice. At least half of the programme is based in the clinical environment, rotating through a range of core and elective medical and surgical specialties across primary and secondary care. PA student clinical placements are a fundamental part of the educative process, incorporating theory with practice and building confidence and competence. However, it is recognised that placements can also be challenging mentally, physically and financially, and a source of anxiety and stress.

This handbook is a practical guide to help PA students prepare for clinical placements, giving factual and useful information to enable students to function safely, maximise the opportunities available and get the most out of their attachments. It provides general guidance and principles (not specific to any one placement area) applicable to most areas of practice. With good preparation, communication and commitment students stand the best chance of being successful in achieving their objectives and find that placements can be incredibly enriching and rewarding experiences.





## Notes

# Getting there

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As a PA student on placement, you will be expected to exhibit the professional behaviours and attitudes of a medical healthcare professional. These are defined by the General Medical Council and detailed in *Good Medical Practice: interim standards for physician associates and anaesthesia associates* (2021). In addition to this the GMC has also published guidance for medical students, *Achieving Good Medical Practice* (2016) which explains the standards of professional behaviour as a student. Whilst the latter publication is specifically for medical students, this guidance is relevant to PA students pending regulation with the GMC. We have outlined the main points below, but you should familiarise yourself with both documents. In addition to this your university may also have professionalism expectations that you are required to uphold and demonstrate whilst on placement; again you should be aware of these. The Faculty of Physician Associates has a published Code of Conduct and Scope of Professional Practice for qualified PAs which is based on GMC guidance.

### **Standards expected for doctors and medical students; also applicable to PAs**

#### **Domain 1: Knowledge, skills and performance**

##### **Develop and maintain your professional performance**

- As a registered PA, you will be expected to keep your skills and knowledge up to date so you can give your patients the best standard of care

##### **Apply knowledge and experience to practice**

- PAs must recognise and work within the limits of their competence

##### **Record your work clearly, accurately, and legibly**

**Domain 2: Safety and quality**

- Contribute to and comply with systems to protect patients
- Respond to risks to safety
- Protect patients and colleagues from any risk posed by your health

**Domain 3: Communication, partnership and teamwork**

- Communicate effectively
- Work collaboratively with colleagues to maintain or improve patient care
- Ensure continuity and coordination of care
- Establish and maintain partnerships with patients
- Maintain patient confidentiality

**Domain 4: Maintaining trust**

- Show respect for patients
- Treat patients and colleagues fairly and without discrimination
- Act with honesty and integrity

Source: *Good Medical Practice* (GMC, 2021) and *Achieving Good Medical Practice* (GMC, 2016).

**Challenge yourself – Professionalism guidance**

Familiarise yourself with the supporting documentation for clinical placements. This includes:

- GMC *Good Medical Practice: interim standards for physician associates and anaesthesia associates*
- GMC *Achieving Good Medical Practice*
- University documentation including handbooks, assessment guidance and professionalism expectations
- Faculty of Physician Associates – Code of Conduct and Scope of Professional Practice.

## 17.1 Being professional on placements – practical steps

The following steps are taken from the GMC publication *Achieving Good Medical Practice* (2016):

- Always introduce yourself to patients, letting them know your name and that you are a Physician Associate student.
- When you meet a patient for the first time, check if they have any objections to having a student present.
- If your university or placement provider has given you an ID badge or similar, make sure it is always visible.
- Dress smartly and in line with dress codes set out by your university or placement provider.
- Arrive on time for your placement and do not leave your placement early unless you have agreed this with a relevant supervisor.
- Attend induction sessions if they are offered.
- Attend all mandatory training arranged for you while on a placement.
- Make sure you know about and follow the rules and guidance specific to your placement, including how you should raise any concerns. If in doubt, make sure you ask if there is anything in particular you should know at the start of your placement.
- Be honest with patients if you do not know the answer to their questions. Patients appreciate that you are there to learn.
- Make sure you know who is responsible for directly supervising you on your placement and who has the overall responsibility for PA students where you are working. This will help you understand where to go if you need help and if you have any concerns you need to raise.
- Be aware that while on any elective, in the UK or abroad, as a student you should still apply the advice in this guidance wherever possible.

In addition to the above, if you get the opportunity to type in the notes always sign them clearly, stating your name and PHYSICIAN ASSOCIATE STUDENT and then whichever doctor, PA or healthcare professional has reviewed the patient. If you have not finished writing the notes and are called away to do something else, it is always good to write \*notes unfinished\* or similar.



### Top tips

- Be honest – if someone asks you a question that you do not know the answer to, that's OK. You are a student, and they are expecting to teach you. If a patient asks you a question that you are not sure about, be honest and say that you will ask a senior.
- Don't pretend to be a medical student. You are a PA student and that is something to be proud of!

### Potential areas for concern around professionalism

- Persistent inappropriate attitude or behaviour
- Failing to demonstrate good medical practice
- Drug or alcohol misuse
- Cheating or plagiarising
- Dishonesty or fraud, including dishonesty outside the professional role
- Aggressive, violent or threatening behaviour
- Any caution or conviction

Source: *Achieving Good Medical Practice* (GMC, 2016).

Breaking confidentiality is also a cause for concern.