



School of **COMMUNITY MEDICINE**

Info for High School Students Interested in PA School

How do I become a Physician Assistant (PA)?

- 1) You would normally go to college and receive a bachelor's degree, usually four years.
- 2) Then, you would go to PA school for another 30 months.
- 3) Unlike Medical School graduates, PA graduates do not have to complete a residency. PA's work in all different areas and are trained by a physician in the area of practice where they are hired.

What should I pick for a major when I go to college?

- 1) It doesn't matter! There is no specific major for which PA schools are looking.
- 2) You should pick something you find interesting, whether it is science-related or not.
- 3) It is not specifically recommended that you major in a specific health profession training program such as Physical Therapy or Nursing. These are professional programs that prepare you for a specific profession OTHER THAN being a doctor.

Are there certain courses I should take in high school or college?

- 1) PA schools do not require any high school courses, but they do require college courses in Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and often Math and English. You do not have to take extra courses in these areas in high school if you do not want to.
- 2) You SHOULD enter college with skills that will prepare you for these types of courses. You should have good analytical thinking and problem solving skills for Science and Math, and good communication skills for English.
- 3) Each PA School has its own set of prerequisite coursework. Prerequisites are specific classes you have to have before you can be admitted to a professional school such as medical school. OUSCM's prerequisites can be found at <http://tulsa.ou.edu/pa/prerequisites.html>.

What can I be doing NOW to prepare myself for PA school?

- 1) Develop good time management and study skills. Some students work really hard in high school, but some don't need to work hard to get good grades. However, college is much, much harder. Learn to set aside a certain amount of time each day to study, even if you don't have to now. Take notes in class and review your notes when you get home. Practice studying early – NOT waiting until the night before the test. These suggestions sound obvious, but you'd be surprised at how many first year students in college have NOT practiced these skills. You need to get VERY good grades if you want to go to PA school, and you need good study skills to get good grades.
- 2) Explore the health care profession. Volunteer in a hospital, clinic, nursing home, hospice or other health care facility, or "shadow" a doctor or PA. You will do more of this in college, but the sooner you start, the sooner you will find out if you are REALLY interested in becoming a doctor. Explore other health professions such as nursing, medicine, physical therapy, occupational therapy, etc. PA programs expect a certain amount of health care experience from applicants to be competitive for admission. The more experience the better!