UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM

PRIMARY PRECEPTOR OVERVIEW

Introduction:
This overview will provide you with the information you need regarding the preceptor's responsibilities and obligations for this challenging commitment. The Program is competency-based, that is, in order to graduate, each student must be able to demonstrate competencies in performing patient assessment and patient management functions. The PA student gains competencies through different teaching modalities (classroom activities, simulations, practice lab; and through the one-to-one teaching during the clinical phases). As a preceptor, you play a primary role by providing the appropriate learning environment. While the curricular model of the UND PA program is somewhat unique, your teaching and supervision of a PA student in the clinical setting is similar to precepting a medical student.

The 24 month Physician Assistant Program consists of the following:

- Eight months (2 ½ semesters) of preclinical basic science coursework via online education
- 14 weeks of primary care didactic instruction on the UND campus conducted on a rotating basis with each didactic session followed by a supervised clinical experience
- 46 weeks of supervised clinical practice experience; 32 weeks with primary care, including two weeks with a hospitalist, two weeks in an urgent care setting (this may also be with the primary preceptor depending on clinical site), and 14 weeks in specialty clerkship rotations (with a recommended return to primary care for three weeks prior to graduation)
- Final three weeks at the UND campus prior to graduation

The didactic instruction and clinical experiences are conducted on a rotating basis. Each didactic session is followed by a clinical phase to provide correlation of didactic instruction and clinical experience. The student will begin in the clinical setting with the primary preceptor AFTER the conclusion of the Primary Care I didactic session at UND (mid-February).

Summary of Coursework:

Primary Care I/Primary Care I Clinical: Patient Assessment
After the preclinical basic science courses, the PA student will spend four weeks at UND. The focus of this course will be patient assessment. This is followed by eight weeks (4 days/week) at the clinical site working under the supervision of the preceptor with one-to-one hands-on teaching. This phase will emphasize clinical experiences for development of skills in taking a complete history, performing a physical examination and documentation (complete H&P’s). The general timeframe for this clinical experience is mid-February through mid-April.

Primary Care II/Primary Care II Clinical: Management of the most Common Acute, Emergent and Chronic Conditions seen in Primary Care
Upon successful completion of Primary Care I Clinical, the PA student will return to UND for five additional weeks of didactic instruction before returning to the clinical site. This didactic course uses the problem solving process to instruct students in the diagnosis and management of acute, emergent & chronic conditions seen in the child, adult, elderly, and pregnant women in the...
primary care setting. Emphasis is placed on analysis of a symptom and the process of
developing a diagnosis for the system areas. The most common conditions seen in primary care
are taught in a system-based approach including areas of ENT, pulmonary, cardiovascular,
gastrointestinal, musculoskeletal, endocrine, behavioral science, nutrition, genetics, and
radiology. The pharmacology portion of this course expands from introductory pharmacological
concepts to principles of drug therapy, the rules and regulations of prescription writing,
scheduling of drugs, and the use of generic vs. brand name drugs. It also emphasizes
pharmacological preparations (organized by systems) used in acute, emergent & chronic
conditions through teaching the principles of rational drug therapy: selection, initiation, and
monitoring, with current information regarding efficacy, toxicity, and the cost of
pharmacological agents. Skills labs in suturing, casting and splinting are also completed.

Following five weeks of didactic instruction, an extensive clinical practicum of 13 weeks
supervised by a preceptor is required to assist students in the synthesis and application of
theoretical and scientific concepts in a primary care, hospital and urgent care setting. The
general timeframe for this clinical experience is mid-May through mid-August.

Primary Care III/Primary Care III Clinical: Management of Common Acute, Emergent and
Chronic Conditions seen in Primary Care
Upon successful completion of Primary Care II Clinical, the PA student will return to
UND for five weeks of didactic instruction. This course uses the problem solving process
to instruct students in the diagnosis and management of acute, emergent & chronic
conditions seen in the child, adolescent, adult and elderly in the primary care setting.
Management of patient’s with multiple problems is emphasized. Components of
medical interviewing and documentation are continued, adapting to a variety of patient
situations. Conditions less commonly seen in primary care are taught in a system based
approach including dermatology, eye, neurology, genitourinary/renal, hematology,
women’s health, cancer, and infectious disease. Content areas of radiology, nutrition,
behavioral science and genetics are continued from PA 550. The pharmacology portion
of this course emphasizes pharmacological preparations (organized by systems) used in
acute, emergent & chronic conditions through teaching the principles of rational drug
therapy: selection, initiation, and monitoring, with current information regarding
efficacy, toxicity, and the cost of pharmacological agents. Special emphasis is given to
drug interactions and poly-pharmacy. The general timeframe for this clinical experience
is mid-October through December.

Following, completion of PA 560, the 11 week clinical practicum supervised by a preceptor is
required to assist students in the synthesis and application of theoretical and scientific concepts
as it relates to patients in primary care, including outpatient, hospital, rehab, palliative and long
term care settings. If the primary preceptor does not see hospital patients, the student will need
to work with the preceptor to identify a hospitalist for which the student can study under for a
two week period within the Primary Care III Clinical course.

Specialty Clerkships
Upon successful completion of Primary Care III Clinical, the student completes fourteen
weeks of clinical experience with emphasis placed on types of patients/ patient settings
that would best round out the individual student’s learning. The responsibility of the
primary care preceptor for this course is to assist the student in connecting their learning
needs to clinical resources within the primary preceptor’s referral system. This allows the
student to build a referral base for themselves in anticipation of a clinical practice in that geographic location. Clerkship settings of emergency department and general surgery are required. Other clerkship areas are determined by evaluation of patient tracker and clinical experiences obtained within the primary care clerkship. It is also recommended that the final clerkship consist of a return to the primary care clinical site to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the student and their readiness to enter their clinical practice prior to graduation. The general timeframe for this clinical experience is the month of April.

**Summative/Evaluative Didactic Instruction**

For the final three weeks, the student returns to the UND campus for: comprehensive testing; summary lectures to prepare for national boards; formal presentation of their Special Projects; lectures to prepare them for the role of “provider”; and participation in graduation.

Primary Care I Clinical is the most time consuming for the preceptor. As the student develops competencies, tasks can be delegated and the supervision time decreases. By Primary Care III Clinical, the student should be quite productive in the practice setting. The preceptor is required to review and sign various assignments given the student and asked to complete evaluations after each clinical phase. All forms are supplied by the Program, and where feasible, available online. Nearing the end of each clinical phase, a faculty member either makes an on-site visit or conducts a phone conference call to you and the student to discuss the student’s progress and performance.

Soon after the student arrives to begin Primary Care I Clinicals, a member of program faculty (usually the student’s advisor) will make an on-site visit to discuss in detail the information you need to serve as the student’s clinical preceptor. The Program will provide a **Preceptor Handbook** containing information to assist you as a clinical preceptor, including further delineation of your responsibilities.

The UND School of Medicine carries liability insurance on each student.

Completed applications are screened against Program expectations, and selected teams are scheduled for pre-selection interviews. If the applicant is accepted into the program, the preceptor will receive a letter providing the exact dates of all phases of the program.

If you have any questions or need more information, please contact the PA Program at:

**Physician Assistant Program**  
University of North Dakota  
School of Medicine and Health Sciences  
501 N Columbia Road Stop 9037  
Grand Forks, North Dakota 58202-9037  
Phone: (701) 777-2344  
Toll Free: (866) 431-2087  
Fax: (701) 777-2491  
Email: rhonda.mcdaniel@med.und.edu  
Website: [http://www.med.und.edu/physician-assistant/](http://www.med.und.edu/physician-assistant/)