



## THE ADVANTAGES OF SHADOWING A SURGICAL PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT

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Shadowing is an enriching and educative experience for those considering or interested in pursuing a career as a Surgical Physician Assistant. With the increasing quantity of PAs and competitiveness of PA programs, prospective PA students are curious to know the role of a Surgical Physician Assistant and the various benefits that one can gain in shadowing a Surgical Physician Assistant.

What is the role of a Surgical Physician Assistant?

Highly skilled Surgical PAs assist the surgeon in the global management of patient care in all perioperative environments (in office care, administration, researcher, committee member, pharmaceutical rep liaison) but their essential role is assisting licensed physicians during surgical procedures. Surgical PAs first assist during surgery, perform post-op procedures, dictate discharge summaries, write prescriptions, confirms follow-up appointments and collaborates with the physician, nurses, healthcare administration, patients and patients families.

Benefits of Shadowing a Surgical Physician Assistant

Shadowing a Surgical Physician Assistant will allow students to see the unparalleled continuity of patient care, autonomy and medical decision making that the Surgical PA profession provides during and outside of surgery and how to handle routine surgical procedures and complications. Students will gain extensive medical knowledge of surgical procedures and subspecialties of a surgical PA such as Cardiothoracic Surgery, Neurosurgery, Plastic Surgery, Orthopedic Surgery, General Surgery, as well as many other subspecialties of surgery. The student will learn the policies and procedures of the Operating Room such as learning how to “scrub in” and becoming familiar with the various surgical tools utilized during surgical procedures. Shadowing allows students to see the challenges and rewards first hand of a surgical PA, gaining insight not only in surgical procedures, but becoming involved from the initial patient assessment to the post- surgical care, enabling incredible continuity of patient care.

Interviewing a highly skilled Cardiothoracic Surgical PA of 25 years and astounding professor himself, Bill Drace, a PA professor at the University of Alabama at Birmingham states “All future PAs need to be exposed to everything medicine offers, including surgery. Most students will never experience the wonderful world of surgery and learn the intricacies of what it entails from both an anatomic and physiologic point of view. Allowing students to shadow a PA in surgery will allow students to see another side of medicine, one that is very special, allowing students to see results first hand.” Drace went on to say, “Have you ever planted a seed and watched it fully grow into a plant? That is like surgery. You get to see the direct results of what your surgery means to a patient. Whether it’s Plastics or Neurosurgery. That is something that should be passed to the future PA student as they shadow.”

Who Is Eligible to Shadow A Surgical Physician Assistant?

Whether a prospective PA student is in high school, college, or graduate school, shadowing is highly recommended prior to applying to PA school. Shadowing allows the student to establish close relationships with the PAs and physicians and allows admission committees to see the student’s initiative and desire to further pursue a career as a surgical PA, as well as provides a letter of recommendation and future job opportunities.



AASPA states that “The strongest way to ensure your success as a PA applicant is to know exactly why you desire to become a PA, how your previous clinical and non-clinical experience has prepared you for a career as a clinician, and the intense extent of training necessary to achieve this responsibility.”