

The Profession

Physician Assistants (PAs) were introduced to the Ontario civilian health care system in 2006 through a joint initiative between the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) and the Ontario Medical Association. Working as part of a team, PAs support physicians in a broad range of health care settings and provide care under the supervision of a registered physician. Their duties vary but in general PAs conduct patient interviews, take medical histories, perform physical examinations, provide counselling on preventive health care, and perform certain controlled acts under the delegation of their supervising physician.

Although relatively new in Ontario, PAs have been employed in the Canadian Forces, Manitoba, and United States for many years (over 80,000 employed in U.S. currently). They are also being integrated into the health care systems of several other countries around the world. Two PA education programs were developed as part of Ontario's HealthForceOntario strategy. These programs are located at McMaster University, and the University of Toronto in collaboration with the Northern Ontario School of Medicine and The Michener Institute for Applied Health Sciences.

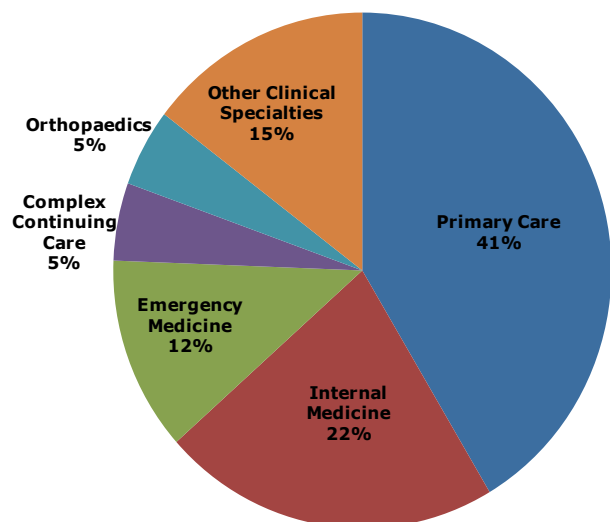
As part of MOHLTC strategies to reduce wait times, and improve access to care in high need areas, over 110 PAs have already been integrated into various health care settings and locations across Ontario. Time limited financial support was provided to eligible employers who hired Ontario PA graduates in 2010 and 2011. PA graduates have also been hired by employers who receive no funding.

The Data

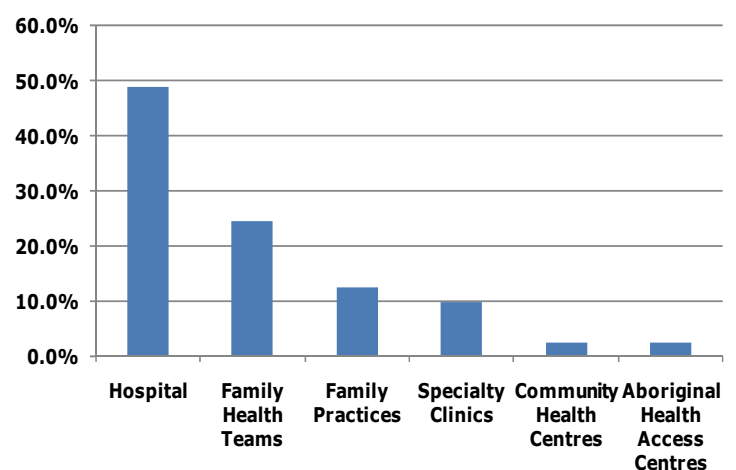
There have been 62 graduates of Ontario PA programs, and approximately 45 are expected to graduate annually. Data included below focuses on the 41 graduates in 2011:

- 170 applications were submitted by employers interested in hiring PAs. 24.4% of applications were received from Family Health Teams, 20.1% from emergency medicine, 10.7% from general internal medicine.
- All 2011 PA graduates secured employment in Ontario within 3 months of graduating.
- Of the 41 graduates in 2011, 25% accepted positions in northern or rural regions as defined by the Rural Index of Ontario (RIO): http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/uap/uap_rio.html
- The positions accepted by PA grads are spread across 20 different cities within 13 of the 14 Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs).
- 17 of the graduates are working alongside physicians in primary care settings, 9 in internal medicine, 5 in emergency medicine, 2 in complex continuing care, 2 in orthopaedics, and 6 in other practice/clinical specialties.
- The graduates are employed in a variety of different practice settings: 20 in hospitals, 10 in family health teams, 5 in family practices, 4 in specialty clinics, 1 in a community health centre (CHC), and 1 in an aboriginal health access centre (AHAC).

2011 PA Graduates - Practice Specialties



2011 PA Graduates - Practice Settings



Further information and resources regarding the PA initiative can be accessed through the HealthForceOntario website at: <http://www.healthforceontario.ca/Work/OutsideOntario/HealthProfessionalsOutsideOntario/OntarioPhysicianAssistantInitiative.aspx>