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## Physician Associate Role in Primary Care

### Background

The role of Physician Associate (PA) can be adopted across a wide range of health care provision, although most commonly within an acute care setting. However, there are some good examples of how PAs can work very effectively within a primary health care setting, most notably in the West Midlands.

The following draws on the experiences of Hazelwood Group Practice in Coleshill, Warwickshire.

### PA role in General Practice

The Physician Associate undertakes a wide range of roles under the supervision of the GP including:

- Telephone triage
- Open surgery, managing their own lists
- Ordering investigations
- Home visits
- Liaison and referrals with other teams and services
- Procedures such as coil fittings, contraceptive implants
- 6/52 mother and baby checks
- Minor surgery
- Complete reports: holiday cancellation forms, DWP forms and insurance medicals
- Assist GP (for example, HGV exams, DVLA forms etc which are then signed by the GP)

### What to expect from a recently qualified PA

Hazelwood Group Practice currently have 2 PAs working in the team, one of which has recently joined the team after working in vascular surgery the other is a Practice Partner and well established in the team. Physician Associates within the Group are fully audited alongside their GP colleagues including consultation audit. It is important to note that early on, the PA will need some input and guidance from the GP, but will work very well on their own after that. The following describes the role of the newer PA:

- Primarily deal with minor illnesses with a plan in place to start to develop her to more complex cases
- The PA holds 15 minute appointments with the senior PA and GPs booking into her slots (following their telephone triage processes)
- Trained to fit IUD coils and contraceptive implants
- Writes up prescriptions during appointments and uses a 'special knock' for GP colleague to sign, any controlled drugs will be discussed and questioned by the GP
- Writes up X-ray and MRI referrals during appointments and uses a 'special knock' for GP colleague to sign

- Will seek help from GP colleague for any complex cases (will wait until patient leaves)

## The role of the Physician Associate Practice Partner

The more experienced PA has been a practice partner for 3 years and works at a very high level. It may be useful to know that this PA was interviewed for the partnership alongside several GPs who also applied for the position.

- Open surgery – has the same slots and timescales as GP colleagues
- Telephone triage – All patients are called by the GP or PA to review patient needs and decide if a face to face appointment are necessary. The PA manages his own list
- Conducts home visits – GPs and PA meet mid-morning to distribute the home visit schedule between them
- Writes up prescriptions during appointments and uses a ‘special knock’ for GP colleague to sign, any controlled drugs will be discussed and questioned by the GP
- Writes up X-ray and MRI referrals during appointments and uses a ‘special knock’ for GP colleague to sign
- Trained in minor surgery

## For further information

If you are interested in finding out more around how Hazelwood Practice Group have successfully integrated PAs within their workforce, please contact [Suzanne.Hughes@nw.hee.nhs.uk](mailto:Suzanne.Hughes@nw.hee.nhs.uk) in the first instance.