What is a physician associate?
Physician associates (PAs) are medically trained generalist healthcare professionals who work alongside doctors and the multi-disciplinary team to provide patient care. They are dependent practitioners and are trained in tasks such as taking medical histories, performing physical examinations, and carrying out procedures within their scope of practice, alongside a dedicated supervisor. Typically, PAs complete a two-year intense Masters/Postgraduate Diploma in Physician Associate Studies following a science-based undergraduate degree. There are limited universities now offering a four-year undergraduate integrate Masters programme. Currently, PAs cannot prescribe or request ionising radiation (such as x-rays or CT imaging).

A PA in ENT – Ms Emily Harrison PA-R
I joined the ENT department at the Royal Berkshire Hospital in 2019 upon qualifying as a physician associate, having spent time here as a student while training. I am involved in several aspects of patient care, including adult and paediatric outpatient clinics, as well as working alongside our ENT Surgeon of the Week in the emergency department, the ENT assessment unit and seeing inpatients on the ward.

I have been able to gain key practical ENT skills such as nasal endoscopy, microsuction and epistaxis management. Since joining the team as the first PA in the department, I have been involved in developing new patient pathways, such as the ‘One Stop Nasal Fracture Clinic’, in which I see patients for history-taking, examination and if indicated, manipulation of nasal bones under local anaesthesia. We also introduced a PA problem-based clinic, the hoarse voice clinic, for a one-stop assessment including flexible laryngoscopy. Additionally, I recently started a monthly PA thyroid cancer follow-up clinic to monitor patients jointly with oncology support.

My role includes triaging new referrals on the two-week wait pathway, in addition to taking on supplementary roles such as rota coordinator and supporting research activity. As a non-rotating member of staff, I am able to provide continuity of care to patients, and I am also involved in supporting SHOs during their induction and attachment. I have also been supported by the department to start a management degree through the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust and Henley Business School.

Example skillset for a PA in ENT:
- Otoscopy/microsuction
- Nasal Endoscopy
- Flexible Laryngoscopy
- Neck Examination
- Nasal cautery AgN03
- Nasal cautery bipolar
- Anterior nasal packing
- Basic ENT examination
- Quinsy aspiration
- Crico-thyroidotomy
- LA Nasal # manipulation
My experience of working in ENT demonstrates that the PA role can be shaped to the needs of the service within each department, alongside the special interests of the PA and their supporting colleagues. If you wish to find out more about physician associates in ENT, I am very happy to be contacted.

**A consultant view on a PA in ENT – Mr Rogan Corbridge**

A growing population, an increase year-on-year in referrals, and a limited number of doctors coming out of training, all mean that we urgently need to consider new ways of delivering the healthcare needs of our local populations. PAs are highly trained medical professionals that are readily available and very keen to roll up their sleeves and get stuck in to help. Having a PA is a bit like having the best SHO you have ever had... and keeping them long term! There are lots of opportunities and they can be developed to fit the needs of your service, whether that be in emergency care or routine elective. Having Emily gives stability to the ever-rotating carousel of junior doctors, as well as allowing new patient pathways and services to be developed. This is a hugely exciting opportunity for ENT.

Where can I find more information on physician associates?

- [Royal College of Physicians Faculty of Physician Associates: Who are physician associates?](#)
- [Thames Valley and Wessex Physician Associates](#)
- [Physician associates promotional video (Youtube)](#)