WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE PA WITHIN GENERAL PRACTICE?

PAs are mid-level dependent medical professionals who are trained as generalists in the medical model to perform tasks such as obtaining patient medical histories, performing clinical procedures and clinical examinations, diagnosing diseases, and formulating medical management plans.

On qualification, a PA is able to see patients in their own appointment slots, formulate a differential diagnosis, and develop a patient-centred management plan. The responsibilities held by a PA working within general practice vary depending on their experience, and their scope of practice will develop over time at the discretion of their named supervising GP, with many experienced PAs working at a semi-autonomous level. This means that supervision may be remote, such as when PAs are providing home visits or care home reviews. **Although PAs are currently unable to prescribe, they are trained in clinical therapeutics and are therefore able to prepare prescriptions for their supervising GP to sign, having devised an appropriate management plan.** Other responsibilities of PAs include reviewing diagnostic test results such as blood tests and imaging reports, reviewing correspondence from secondary care, and referring patients on an urgent or non-urgent basis to the emergency department, assessment unit, or secondary care specialties. PAs have also been utilised in helping practices reach Quality and Outcomes Framework targets, and in educating patients in specialist review clinics.

GPs reported that they utilised PAs to see the less complex patients, allowing GPs to focus on the more complex clinical presentations.