

Physician Associate Professional Standards for New Zealand

Since the inception of the Physician Associate (PA) profession in New Zealand in 2012, the New Zealand Physician Associate Society (NZPAS) has developed and follows guidelines in conjunction with guidance from the Ministry of Health with strict utilization of the professions' international standards. This will continue until regulation is implemented, and a regulatory authority assumes this responsibility.

Setting standards of clinical, and cultural competence and ethical conduct for physician associates is the primary focus of the New Zealand Physician Associate Society (NZPAS). Our current standards set the principles and values that define good medical practice and outline what to expect from all physician associates in all aspects of their professional behavior. These standards are based on standards already well established by the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and Canada in addition to medical practitioner standards from MCNZ.

The NZPAS follows these international standards as well as the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumer Rights as part of Manatu Hauora's Non-Regulated Health Professions guidelines under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act (the Act).

The successful physician associate pilot in Aotearoa set the stage for the beginnings of the profession by assessing its “fit for practice”. Every PA practicing in the country works under a close supervisory relationship with a New Zealand Registered medical professional and the PA’s scope of practice “mirrors” the supervising medical practitioner’s scope of practice.

- PAs obtain the same orientation that medical practitioners from other countries are expected to receive when beginning their work in New Zealand.
- Communication and consent of the interactions with patients and their Whanau are established within the supervising medical practitioner guidelines. When discussing treatment options and making informed choices, the maintenance of and care for the patient follows these guidelines.
- Cultural safety is established with each patient and provides space for patients to be involved in the decision making of their own care, and to contribute to the care provided for them to provide health outcomes that are positive and meet expectations and cultural guidelines and experiences. Cultural safety and health equity, delivered by physician associates practicing in Aotearoa follow guidelines consistent with Te Oahu Rata O Aotearoa. Te Ora offers webinar series and other educational programs to enhance the PA's knowledge, understanding and care for Maori people. PAs are expected to support and follow the cultural safety and Maori health equity guidelines established within each clinical practice. Most physician associates have years of experience practicing in multicultural areas in their home countries before moving to New Zealand. Cultural competency is a core requirement for obtaining licensure and practicing as a PA professional.
- Conduct and professionalism are consistent with the physician associate international guidelines, and best practices policies. If there are any conflicts of interest or concerns about a PA seeing a patient, a doctor will be provided to deliver care. Physician associates are deemed to be fit to practice before they are hired and have provided information on their national certification from their country of origin. They are graduates from an accredited university and have a physician associate studies master's degree.

- Certifications standards must be upheld in the country of origin and maintenance of certification requirements and regulation are maintained throughout their work in New Zealand. This will remain until regulation is obtained in New Zealand.

Reference link for the PA competencies attached below

https://www.gmc-uk.org/-/media/documents/gmp-2024-final---english_pdf-102607294.pdf#page2

<https://capa-acam.ca/practicing-physician-assistants/international-pas/>

<https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/phase-ii-physician-assistant-demonstrations-evaluation-report-jul15.pdf>

<https://www.nccpa.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PACompetencies.pdf>

<https://www.fparcp.co.uk/professional-development/cpd>