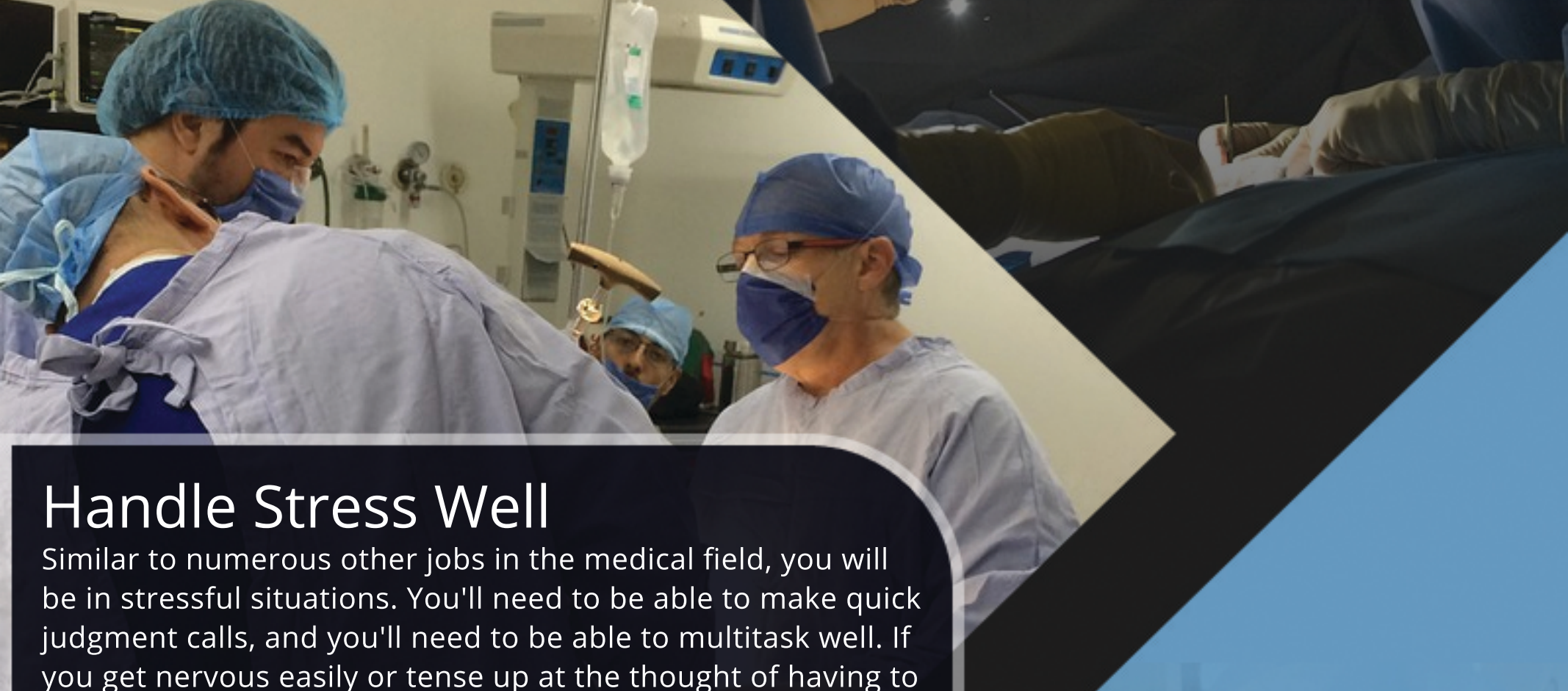


MUST HAVE TRAITS OF EVERY PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT

Be Humble

Be humble enough to know your limits and to know when you need to consult a physician. If you take on a case that is out of your realm of knowledge, there's the potential to misdiagnose, risk your patient's health and be the reason for a lawsuit against your practice.

The duties of a PA are determined by the physician and are specific to the doctor's specialty. For instance, PAs are not allowed to work in dentistry nor can they fit patients for contact lenses in California.



Handle Stress Well

Similar to numerous other jobs in the medical field, you will be in stressful situations. You'll need to be able to make quick judgment calls, and you'll need to be able to multitask well. If you get nervous easily or tense up at the thought of having to make decisions on the spur of the moment, a medical facility may not want to hire you. An example of when you need to handle stress is when you're faced with patients who are suffering from ailments that require immediate medical attention like a hypertensive emergency. Physician assistants must possess good decision-making skills, so that your response to the issue is a logical solution.




Stay Detail Oriented

In order to diagnose and treat patients, a physician assistant must be detail oriented. This is important when a physician assistant is relaying details back to a doctor in order to provide the proper treatment to the patient. One common medical error related to not being detail oriented is missing the fact that a patient has a medication allergy, which could result in death.

Effective Communication Skills in Patient Education

Given that 89 to 90 million adults in the United State have limited health literacy, you may probably see patients every day who have trouble reading and understanding health information, especially if English is their secondary language. Educating your patients increases their satisfaction with your medical facility, keeps them aware of best wellness practices and makes your claims process more efficient. Take the time to develop and provide educational resources and you'll have better informed, more engaged patients.



Be Compassionate and Caring

In order to take care of patients and keep their best interest at heart, it's vital that you have a genuine love for helping people and that you really care about them. Without being caring and compassionate, you may not be giving your all and doing everything that you can to assist your patients with their medical conditions. Working as a physician assistant is more than just treating and diagnosing. It is about demonstrating commitment to compassionate patient care.


Emotional stability:

As a physician assistant, you may be dealing with patients who are in critical condition. The work can be high stress. In addition, both patients and family members may sometimes become upset over their situations. Anger gets misdirected, and tempers may fly. Physician assistants need to be able to deal with all types of situations calmly without letting their personal feelings get in the way of providing the best possible care.



Work well independently:

Physician assistants work under the supervision of a licensed physician, but that does not mean they are side by side with the doctor at all times. A physician assistant often performs some of the duties of his or her supervising doctor in the place of the physician. For example, a physician assistant may examine patients post-operatively and follow up on their care while the doctor is performing surgery. Being able to work well on your own is a valuable skill for a physician assistant.



Be a team player:

It may seem like a contradiction to be a team player and work well on your own, but as a physician assistant you will need to do both. There will be times when you will work along with other members of the allied healthcare team, such as nurses, therapists and case managers. Keep in mind that it takes a team of medical professionals working together to be able to provide optimal care for patients.

Adaptability:

You may be doing one thing one minute and, at the next moment, you need to shift your focus to something completely different. That is how medicine sometimes works. Physician assistants often deal with new admissions, emergency consultations and unexpected procedures. Also, the doctor you are working with may suddenly need you to take on additional responsibilities. A physician assistant needs to be able to shift gears quickly.



Confidence:

Many times, you will be the eyes and ears of the physician with whom you are working. You may see the patients more than the doctor does. Physician assistants need to have strong patient assessment skills and good judgment. Assistants need to have confidence in their abilities and decision making. Keep in mind that confidence does not mean "winging it" when you are unsure of what to do. Knowing when you are over your head and need help is also a sign of good judgment.