

Pre-Anesthesiologist Assistant Program

Contact Info:

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What is an Anesthesiologist Assistant?

An anesthesiologist assistant holds a similar role to physician assistants who aide doctors. Anesthesiologist assistants specifically help anesthesiologists during pre-op, surgery, and post-op. Common job duties include taking health histories from patients, performing physical exams, diagnostic testing, catheterization, administering and monitoring anesthesia, post-op monitoring, life support, documentation, and reporting.

The Pathway

To become an anesthesiologist assistant, students must complete a four-year bachelor's degree with a rigorous science and math curriculum that is very similar to a pre-med path. After college, students must be admitted to an anesthesiologist assistant master's program which takes an additional two years to complete. In total, students can expect to be in school for approximately six years.

During college, students learn the fundamentals of biology and chemistry. The master's program builds on this knowledge and includes advanced

Quick Fact: Applicants for anesthesiologist assistant programs take either the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT) or the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) late in spring of junior year or during the summer between junior and senior year of college. Students should check with the program they plan to apply to in order to determine which test they require.

course work in physiology, pharmacology, anatomy and biochemistry. Students learn how to apply the scientific principles to the cardiovascular, respiratory, renal, nervous and neuromuscular systems of the human body. Graduate school also includes clinical training that includes practice in patient care.

Admission to these graduate programs is very competitive. There are only 12 accredited programs in the U.S., including one in Milwaukee at the Medical College of Wisconsin. Most schools bring in fewer than 20 students per year. Typically students will have earned a 3.6 GPA or higher while in college, and will have scored above the 70th percentile on the standardized test for graduate school.

Majors for Pre-Anesthesiologist Assistant

Anesthesiologist assistant schools do not require any specific major but do expect that students will have taken the necessary preparatory math and science coursework needed to succeed in their program. This includes multiple courses in chemistry, organic chemistry, and biochemistry; multiple classes in biological sciences including genetics and anatomy; math, generally through the first semester of calculus; and statistics. Some physics is also required. Because of the heavy emphasis on biology and chemistry, many students choose to major in biology, chemistry, or biochemistry, but that is not a requirement. As long as a student takes the required preparatory coursework, he/she can major in any subject area.

Internships, Experience and Job Shadowing

In addition to strong academic credentials, most anesthesiology assistant programs will require students to have completed a number of hours of job shadowing. Other related healthcare experience through volunteer work, part-time jobs, or research internships can also enhance a student's application to anesthesiologist



assistant school. Students who declare an intention to take a pre-anesthesiologist assistant track will be assigned an advisor who specializes in advising pre-health students and can assist with finding these types of opportunities.

Advising

Because science coursework is very sequential and must be taken in a specific order, students interested in pre-anesthesiologist assistant should express their intentions early so that they can be assigned to the pre-anesthesiologist assistant advisor. An advisor who specializes in healthcare graduate programs will help the student with course selection in addition to guidance on test preparation and experiential opportunities. Taking the right courses beginning in freshman year is vital to staying on track and avoiding a delay in graduation.

History and Career Outlook

The concept of an anesthesiologist assistant was first envisioned in the 1960s when there was a shortage of anesthesiologists. The first formal training programs were launched in the 1970s.

Since then, the profession has continued to grow, and over the past few years has experienced more rapid growth as once again shortages loom in the medical profession. As the population ages, there is more demand for healthcare services and thus more providers are needed.

Job growth is limited by how many students can graduate from the 12 available master's programs each year, but more programs are under development.

Anesthesiologist assistants, in general, earn slightly more than physician assistants due to their more specialized training.

As of 2018, entry-level salaries in Wisconsin are approximately \$180,000 per year

The educational path for physician assistant and anesthesiologist assistant are different at the graduate level, and the two careers are not interchangeable. Someone with an anesthesiologist assistant Master's degree cannot work as a physician assistant and someone with a physician assistant Master's degree cannot work as an anesthesiologist assistant.

Certification as an anesthesiologist assistant is an additional credential that can be earned from the National Commission for Certification of Anesthesiologist Assistants. Certification is not recognized in all states, but where it is, it can increase a person's earning potential. Certification

is achieved through a series of tests and is maintained via continuing education throughout a person's career.

UWM Advantages

Students in the pre-anesthesiologist assistant program at UWM have several unique opportunities outside of the classroom to enhance their preparation for graduate school:

» **Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR):** The OUR program provides access to research experiences for undergraduates. Students work directly with faculty members and graduate students in their chosen field of study.

» **Center for Community-Based Learning, Leadership, and Research.** The Center helps match interested students with opportunities on campus or in the community. It also offers leadership development courses and training to provide students with the philosophical background and tangible skills to make a difference as active citizens during college and after graduation.

» **Specialty Advising.** Students who indicate they are on the pre-anesthesiologist assistant path will be assigned to our pre-health advisor with more than 20 years of experience helping students achieve their healthcare career goals. She assists students not only with course selection but also with finding the right experiential opportunities that will enhance their application to graduate school.

Suggested Pre-Anesthesiologist Assistant Courses

Two semesters of General Chemistry with lab (Chem 102 and Chem 104)
One year of Organic Chemistry with lab (Chem 343, 344, 345)
Biochemistry (Chem 501)
One year of Biology with lab (Bio Sci 150, 152)
One year of anatomy and physiology with lab (Bio Sci 202, 203)
Three advanced lab-based Biology courses in genetics, cellular biology, microbiology (Bio Sci 315, 325, and 383)
One year of Physics with lab
Statistics (Math Stat 215, Psych 210, or Bio 465)
6 credits of English, including composition
Math through the first semester of calculus

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