

Medical Professions

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The health care field has numerous professions. The longer titles are often abbreviated and commonly used without an understanding of their meaning.

MD (*doctor of medicine*) – responsibilities include examination, diagnosis, treatment, and prescribing medication; may work in a variety of settings: private practice, hospitals, teaching facilities, HMO.

RPA-C (*registered physician assistant certified*) – provide health care under the supervision of a physician; examine, diagnosis, and treat patients; may order tests, write prescriptions, and assist in surgery.

RNP (*registered nurse practitioner*) – has a graduate degree in advanced practice nursing; role includes patient examination, ordering tests, and in some states prescribing medication; often seen in family practice, women's health, FNP-C (family nurse practitioner certified).

PT (*physical therapist*) – work with patients to return function and mobility, as well as decrease pain and disability, and promote health and fitness; currently a physical therapist must graduate with a master's degree and pass a national exam.

PTA (*physical therapist assistant*) - works under direct supervision of a physical therapist, following a treatment plan created by a PT, must hold an associates degree; a physical therapy *aide* receives on the job training.

OT (*occupational therapist*) – assist patients in completing activities of daily living and skills required for working, often work in schools, hospitals and skilled nursing facilities, a bachelors degree is required.

COTA (*certified occupational therapist assistant*) – assist in treatment planned by an occupational therapist, an associate's degree is required

DO (*doctor of osteopathic medicine*) – provides health care with an emphasis on hands-on or manual treatment, the focus is on treating the patient as a whole, not just a specific body part.

DC (*doctor of chiropractic*) – provide treatment with manipulations and adjustments of joints, most commonly the spine, after earning a bachelors degree, a DC attends a 3-5 year chiropractic school.

DPM (*doctor of podiatric medicine*) – examination, diagnosis and treatment of medical problems in the ankle, foot or lower leg; may perform surgery.