

Spine Center

The Role of the Physician Assistant in Your Care

Who Makes Up My Care Team at the DuPage Medical Group Spine Center?

Our team is comprised of leaders in spinal surgery, pain management and physiatry. The mission of the Spine Center is to provide patients with comprehensive, multi-disciplinary spine and pain care that is based on a culture of compassion and accessibility. In order to better serve our patients and decrease appointment wait times, we have developed an algorithm to aide in directing patients to the correct provider or specialty within the Spine Center. Based upon the nature of your visit, location of your pain, pre-visit imaging, work-up and physical limitations, you will be directed to a physician assistant, advanced practice nurse, pain management physician, physiatrist or spinal surgeon. Your care begins with understanding your spinal needs. We utilize advanced medical and diagnostic equipment to evaluate your problem and match you with the right specialist for your condition. Your treatment may involve multiple specialists, each focusing on a particular aspect of care. This teamwork approach allows your care to be coordinated under one roof with a team of professionals working together for your benefit.

What are Physician Assistants or Advanced Practice Nurses?

Physician assistants (PA-Cs) and Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs) are licensed healthcare professionals that are credentialed to practice medicine with physician supervision. The PA-Cs in the Spine Center are able to conduct the following comprehensive services:

- Conduct physical exams
- Order & interpret tests
- Diagnose & treat illnesses
- Assist in surgery
- Counsel and educate patients on condition and treatment options
- Write prescriptions
- Serve as a liaison between patient and physician in the hospital or in an outpatient setting

Within the physician-PA and APN relationship, physician assistants and advanced practice nurses exercise autonomy in medical decision making and provide a broad range of diagnostic and therapeutic services. The relationship between a PA or APN and their supervising physician is one of mutual trust and respect. The physician assistants or advanced practice nurses are representatives of our physicians, treating the patient in the style and manner developed and directed by the supervising physician.

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What is the Role of the Physician Assistant in Spinal Surgery

In order to better serve our patients and decrease the amount of time patients wait for an initial appointment, most spinal surgery patients are seen by the physician assistants for initial consultation and work-up. This allows the patient to come in for a consult and have the essential diagnostic tests and/or labs ordered before seeing the physician. When the patient is seen by the surgeon, he can then make an informed decision about plan of care and treatment options based on up to date imaging and exams. Since the physician assistants are present and assist during surgery, their knowledge and interactions with the patients and families serve as an invaluable resource to manage the patient's condition with the aim of optimal patient response to treatment. They aid in coordination of care between the hospital and other healthcare providers managing the patient's care.

What is the Role of the Physician Assistant & Advanced Practice Nurse in Pain Management?

In order to better serve our patients and decrease the amount of time patients wait for an initial appointment, most pain management patients are seen by a physician assistant or advanced nurse practitioner before being seen by the physician to assist with the detailed history and examination. The pain physician will see the patient after the PA or APN have reviewed the imaging, labs, history and have completed the examination. Once a treatment plan has been developed, patients may see the physician assistant/advanced nurse for follow up visits or medication management. This allows for every patient to have their questions answered and essential diagnostic tests and/or lab ordered. Our physicians rotate days and offices on a regular basis. The PA or APN allow for better coordination of care between physicians if patients are not able to see the same physician every visit.