

Get to Know Your PA!

HFHT: What inspired you to become a PA?

Melissa: My journey through life and school lead me down this path. My relationship with my grandmother inspired me to want to work in the healthcare field. I took an interest in the PA program while I was studying my undergraduate degree at Lakehead University. I thought it was a great program designed for a mature student that wanted to study in the medical field. I've always known that I was drawn to helping people and guiding them in a positive direction. The PA program offered something that was new and innovative and something that I saw myself doing as a career.

HFHT: What, exactly, does a PA do?

Melissa: Essentially, a PA is an extension of a physician. We provide care under medical directives that are signed by the physicians/practitioners that we work with. Our role is to help fill a gap in the healthcare system to increase accessibility to care, decrease wait times and improve patient care. We perform histories, physical exams, order investigations and manage treatment plans.

HFHT: What is a typical day in practice like for you?

Melissa: A typical day in practice is having pre-booked patients in my schedule as well as same-day spots open. On average, I see 18 to 24 patients per day. Visits can range from acute care (incisions and wound drainage, upper respiratory tract infections and other small procedures) to chronic disease management (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, congestive heart failure, diabetes visits, screening for dementia, etc.) and many other things. I have been involved in helping patients with health system navigation, reducing elderly patients' medications and completing various forms and long-term care applications. I see patients in their homes as well.

HFHT: What do you like about working in a team environment? What do you think makes for an effective primary healthcare team?

Melissa: I think everyone in a team has such an important role in patient care. The best thing about the team is you have so many professionals that are knowledgeable in different fields of medicine. You are always learning from one another about how to make patient care safe and effective. I think there are two things that make for an effective primary healthcare team: communication and building a relationship/friendship with your team.

HFHT: What are your goals for the future?

Melissa: My goal for the future is to keep advocating and growing in the PA profession. I think there are a lot of opportunities in the Hamilton Family Health Team. I enjoy teaching, taking on students and continuing to learn. There are so many projects and different things we are doing in our practices to optimize patient care that I will continue to be a part of.

HFHT: What is your favourite part about your line of work?

Melissa: My favourite thing about this line of work is building trust, helping and advocating for patients. I love when a patient comes back into the office and gives you a smile just knowing that you helped them in some way.

