

Letter to the Editor

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I am a recent graduate of the Doctorate of Medical Science (DMSc) program from the University of Lynchburg in Virginia. I have received many questions and comments about the program. Therefore, I decided to write a quick letter to share my experiences with readers and clarify some of the most commonly asked questions about the program.

The DMSc course from Lynchburg is a year-long asynchronous online program offered to practicing physician assistants in the United States and abroad. The admission criteria for the program includes holding a master's degree with a minimum grade point average of 3.0, maintaining a current license and/or national certification, and maintaining employment in either physician assistant education or practicing clinically. Those accepted to the program generally possess a strong clinical background and have reached varying levels of leadership positions in his or her institutions. The curriculum encompasses research methods, healthcare administration, healthcare law, global health issues, and disaster medicine. Goals of the program include personal and professional development, clinical growth, and leadership progression. The trend of earning advanced degrees in healthcare is on the rise and the University of Lynchburg was the first to graduate students with a DMSc degree. There are currently 5 other new or developing programs.

Graduates of the DMSc program still introduce themselves as 'Physician Assistants,' leaving the doctorate title for academic settings similar to other allied health professionals. This alleviates any confusion to patients who do not understand the difference between doctors and physicians. Still, doctorate programs can provide professional credentials, add credibility, and prepare PA's for an academic setting. The DMSc degree encourages involvement in the healthcare system, including hospital advisory committees, management or leadership roles at home and abroad.

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