1. What is a physical therapist assistant?
A physical therapist assistant is a skilled professional working under the direction of a physical therapist to provide treatment to a wide variety of patients. The goal of treatment is to improve function, relieve pain, improve mobility, and increase ability. They do this through a wide variety of hands-on treatments and modalities.

2. What do they do?
What PTA's do depends on the setting in which they work. A PTA working in the school system will help with seating, gait training, improving motion and mobility and posture. A PTA in a hospital may see stroke victims, burn patients and a shoulder injury all in one morning. Out-patient orthopedic and sports medicine setting work with acute injuries to active people. Each setting is different and a PTA may move from one setting to another as their career progresses.

3. How long does the program take?
The clinical portion of the program is 18 months in length. You enter in the fall of one year and graduate in the following December. This period is considered the clinical portion of the program and classes during the clinical portion include those listed as "PTA" It will take additional time for you to complete the prerequisites.

4. What is the difference between a physical therapist and a physical therapist assistant?
A physical therapist is a professional with a Doctoral degree. The physical therapist assistant is a licensed professional who works under the direction of a physical therapist. The PTA degree is an associate degree program.

PT's perform the initial evaluation of the patient and develops a plan of care. The PTA is then responsible for carrying out the plan of care, for treating the patient, interacting with the family, doctor, and other caregivers to maximize the patients function. The PTA works under the direction of the PT. Depending upon the state practice act the PT may or may not have to be physically present.

5. Will my PTA program credits transfer if I want to do something else?
Your general education credits (English, math, science, etc.) requirements will transfer according to each college's policy. Actual PTA-designated courses will only transfer to those colleges that accept clinical courses.

6. What's the difference in education between a PT and a PTA?
A physical therapist must have a doctoral degree required approximately 7 years of college. A physical therapist assistant is a two-year, Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree.

7. Are there jobs?
The job market is excellent. We have a list serve and a college e-bulletin board to list all the jobs that employers send to us. Many of our graduates are employed prior to graduation at the affiliation sites where they work as students.

8. Where can I work?
PTA's work in a wide variety of settings. Hospitals, out-patients clinics, the school system, rehabilitation centers, nursing homes, sub-acute facilities, assisted living centers, home health care, fitness centers, private practices, sports medicine centers, cardiac rehabilitation centers, aquatics programs, pediatric centers, equine therapy programs, and many other specialized areas.

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9. How much will my salary be as a PTA?

Right now our graduates are making in the mid to upper 40's when they graduate. Some jobs pay more, some less. Most student's are employed before they graduate by the places in which they do their clinical affiliations.

10. How much does it cost?

All Maryland residents pay Carroll County tuition for PTA courses. Please consult a current catalogue for up-to-date information. Books cost an average of $350/semester. Students are responsible for transportation to all clinical sites.

11. Can I get my own clinical affiliation?

If you have a practice or hospital where you would like to do a clinical affiliation the academic clinical coordinator will arrange for the setting to sign a contract with the college. Please consult the Program Director for further information.

12. I already have a degree. Does that make a difference?

Yes. Consult the requirements section for specific information.

13. I am a (mom, dad, career changer) am I too old to do this?

The average age over the past several years has been in the early 30's. We have had students who are 20 and those who are in their 50's. Most of our students have families and many have worked in different fields prior to entering the program. We have had students who have been athletic trainers and those who have been bartenders. What matters most is a motivation to help people.

14. What is the schedule of classes?

The program is considered full time, but during the first fall, winter, and spring semesters, students are in class only on Tuesday and Thursday. Clinical affiliations are full time in a clinical setting. In the summer session there is a five week, four day/week capstone course. Please consult the SCHEDULE for specifics.

15. Are there night or weekend options?

At this time there are no weekend or night classes. Class does meet only on Tuesday and Thursday in the first fall, the winter, and spring semester.

16. Can I work and go to school?

This program is demanding and the faculty recommends that students do not work. Having said that, most of our students do work at least part-time during their program of study.

17. Can I transfer from another PTA school?

Yes. We will review your transcript from your previous school, assess your skills, and place you appropriately within the Carroll program.

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