Heather A. Free

Physician Assistant

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Contact

Profile

Heather is a graduate of the MSPAS program at Red Rocks Community College, and is licensed in the state of Colorado. Her background is in neuroscience, psychology and cancer biology, having worked in academic research for 15 years before beginning PA school. She has been working as a physician assistant in a busy neurosurgical practice since January, 2020.

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Clinical Experience

**Physician Assistant**

Boulder Neurosurgical Associates / Boulder, CO / January, 2020 to present

Full-time Physician Assistant under the supervision of Dr. Kara Beasley.

* First assist in all neurosurgical cases, including spinal fusions, craniotomies, deep brain stimulator lead and generator placements, spinal cord stimulator trials and implants.
* Personally programs Medtronic and Boston Scientific deep brain stimulation devices.
* Sees patients in clinic for follow up and post operative appointments.
* Rounds on inpatient cases.

**Internal Medicine Clinical Rotation**

Swedish Medical Center / Denver, CO / October, 2019

Month-long clinical rotation in hospitalist medicine under the supervision of Dr. Juan Acosta in the ER, ICU, and cardiac and neurological care units.

* Ordered and interpreted labs and imaging to diagnose and treat exacerbations of chronic conditions such as CHF, atrial fibrillation, COPD, and renal failure.
* Treated acute injuries and illnesses such as acute MI, strokes, subdural and subarachnoid hemorrhages, and electrolyte imbalances.
* Discussed plans for care with patients and their families, including discussions surrounding end-of-life options.

**Surgical Clinical Rotation**

Boulder Neurosurgical and Spine Associates / Boulder, CO / Sept., 2019

Month-long clinical rotation in neurosurgery under the supervision of Dr. Sharad Rajpal and Vickie Beloy, PA-C.

* Acted as first assist and second assist in more than 40 procedures, including craniotomies, brain biopsies, deep brain stimulation, aneurysm coiling and clipping, spinal laminectomies, discectomies and fusions.
* Visited patients in the PACU following surgery to assess and document neurological status.
* Rounded on patients daily in the neuro ICU, performing post-operative care including drain management, ICP and electrolyte monitoring, and coordinating care with hospitalists and other specialists.
* Performed pre-operative and post-operative clinic visits, evaluated new patients, performed neurological exams and consented patients for surgery.
* Gained experience reading MRI and CT images.
* Documented pre-, intra- and post-op status, completed notes on clinic visits, ordered labs and imaging, determined dosing and wrote prescriptions for pain medication and muscle relaxers.

Erie, CO. 80516

Linkedin.com/in/heatherfree

Education

**Masters in Physician Assistant Studies**

Red Rocks Community College Arvada, CO

2017-2019

**Bachelor of Science, Neurobiology**

Michigan State University

East Lansing, MI

1999-2003

**Bachelor of Science,**

**Psychology**

Michigan State University

East Lansing, MI

1999-2003

Licensure

Colorado State License: PA.0006099 Issued 1/3/2020, Expires 1/31/2022

DEA License

Issued 1/6/2020, Expires 9/30/2022

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Clinical Experience / Continued

**Emergency Medicine Clinical Rotation**

The Medical Center of Aurora / Aurora, CO / August, 2019

Month-long clinical rotation in Emergency Medicine under the supervision of Jacob Hopkins, PA-C.

* Independently performed numerous procedures including epistaxis management, abscess incision and drainage, suturing, stapling, joint reductions, casting, splinting, paracentesis and trigger point injections.
* Gained experience in FAST ultrasound imaging.
* Observed and assisted in critical care of numerous patients, including performing CPR, intubation, chest tube insertion, and central line placement.

**Internal Medicine Clinical Rotation**

Department of Corrections / Denver, CO / July, 2019

Month-long clinical rotation under the supervision of Zachary Campbell NP, working in a prison clinic and infirmary, performing intake physicals and treating acute and chronic conditions.

* Acquired experience in an unusual clinical setting complicated by security and resource limitations.
* Gained exposure treating a population with a high incidence of conditions such as hepatitis, HIV/AIDS, and STDs.

**Surgical Clinical Rotation**

Surgical Associates of the Grand Valley / Grand Junction, CO / June, 2019

Month-long clinical rotation under the supervision of Dr. Bradley Baldwin, assisting with over 100 surgeries including laparoscopic cholecystectomies, hernia repairs, hemorrhoidectomies, upper endoscopies, colonoscopies, dermatologic excisions, and numerous other procedures.

* Became proficient at operating room preparation, surgical scrubbing, sterile technique, patient preparation, surgical first assisting, and suturing.
* Developed familiarity with post-anesthesia care, documentation, prescription writing, inpatient surgical follow up, order writing and hospital discharge.
* Obtained over 200 hours of direct patient contact through surgical consultations, patient consenting, intraoperative care, inpatient and outpatient follow up.

Professional Certifications

PCSS Medication-Assisted Therapy Certification

March 2019

ACLS/PALS Certification

January 2020

Adult CPR/AED Certification

August 2017

BLS Certification

August 2017

Memberships

**American Association of Physician Assistants**

2017-present

Volunteering Experiences

University of Colorado Family Housing summer experiences, first aid provider, 2019

9News Health Fair volunteer, 2018 - 2019

Patterson Elementary School Health Fair volunteer, 2018

Denver Urban Scholars Mentorship, 2016 - 2017

Prostate Cancer Awareness Week screening volunteer, 2013 - 2017

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Clinical Experience / Continued

**Inpatient Internal Medicine Clinical Rotation**

Denver Health and Hospital Authority / Denver, CO / May, 2019

Month-long clinical rotation with team of inpatient hospitalist medicine providers, caring for patients with varying levels of chronic and acute conditions such as end-stage renal disease, decompensated cirrhosis, sepsis, electrolyte imbalance, and pancreatitis.

* Gained experience in evaluating laboratory results and imaging to develop comprehensive differential diagnoses and treatment plans for a variety of complex conditions.
* Assisted in numerous procedures, including inserting and removing central lines, thoracentesis, and bone marrow biopsies.
* Documented detailed care plans and discharge summaries.

**Women’s Health Clinical Rotation**

Sunrise Community Health Center / Evans, CO / April, 2019

Month-long clinical rotation at a community health clinic under the supervision of Harlan David PA-C and others, seeing patients across the lifespan, focusing on pregnancy and women’s health.

* Performed annual women’s health exams, pelvic exams, pap smears, and breast exams.
* Inserted and removed various long-acting reversible contraceptive devices, including IUDs and Nexplanon implants, as well as counseled patients on other birth control methods.
* Worked half time with Lindsey Burgess, CNM and completed numerous prenatal visits; measured fundal height, identified fetal heart tones and assisted in ultrasound imaging.
* Completed numerous postnatal visits, including newborn and mother check-ups.

**Psychiatry Clinical Rotation**

Denver Health and Hospital Authority / Denver, CO / March, 2019

Month-long clinical rotation integrating psychiatric and medical care in the inpatient setting across the lifespan under the supervision of Dr. Susanna Kovari and others on the Psychiatric Consult-Liaison team.

* Gained experience diagnosing various personality, mood and psychotic disorders in an underserved urban population.
* Developed treatment plans, evaluated need for mental health holds, attending competency hearings, performed patient and collateral interviews.
* Spent time in the psychiatric emergency ward, the inpatient eating disorder clinic, the pediatric inpatient psychiatric unit, and the Denver CARES Detoxification and Rehabilitation Drug and Alcohol Center.

Core Competencies

**Communication**

Proficient at establishing and sustaining a therapeutic relationship with patients

Skilled at working effectively with physicians and other health care professionals as a member of a health care team

Capable of accurately and adequately documenting information regarding care for medical, legal, quality, and financial purposes

Experience with numerous electronic medical record systems including Epic, Meditech, Athena, eClinicalWorks, eOMIS

**Patient care**

Competently makes decisions about diagnostic and therapeutic interventions based on patient information and preferences, current scientific evidence, and informed clinical judgment

Develops and implements patient management plans

Effectively counsels and educates patients and their families

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Core Competencies, continued

**Medical Knowledge**

Understands, evaluates, and applies evidence-based medicine, scientific principles related to:

Patient care, etiologies, risk factors, underlying pathologic process, and epidemiology for medical conditions

Signs and symptoms of medical and surgical conditions

Appropriate diagnostic studies

Management of general medical and surgical conditions to include treatments, interventions for prevention of disease and health promotion/maintenance

Screening methods to detect conditions in an asymptomatic individual

History and physical findings and diagnostic studies to formulate differential diagnoses

Clinical Experience / Continued

**Family Medicine and Pediatrics Clinical Rotation**

High Plains Community Medicine / Lamar, CO / January, 2019

Month-long clinical rotation in a rural health clinic and critical access hospital under the supervision of Dr. Gino Figlio and Tim Bewley PA-C caring for patients across the lifespan.

* Treated patients with a variety of acute and chronic conditions, documenting visits, ordering and interpreting diagnostic labs, and writing prescriptions.
* Performed numerous well-child checks from birth to age 18.
* Obtained experience in diagnosis, treatment and admission criteria for acute pediatric illnesses such as bronchiolitis, pneumonia and influenza.

**Family Medicine and Pediatrics Clinical Rotation**

Northern MI Medicine and Pediatrics / Traverse City, MI / December, 2018

Six week-long clinical rotation in a fast-paced practice in a small urban area of northern Michigan under the supervision of Dr. Robert Kuhn, caring for patients across the lifespan and focusing on a pediatric population.

* Performed numerous well child checks from birth to age 18.
* Diagnosed and treated a variety of acute and chronic conditions.
* Gained experience completing thorough visits and documentation efficiently, seeing 35-40 patients per day.

**Internal Medicine Clinical Rotation**

Kiowa County Hospital / Eads, CO / September, 2018

Month-long clinical rotation in a small rural community health clinic under the supervision of Dawn Back PA-C, caring for a variety of populations, including mental health, women’s health, and pediatrics.

* Performed procedures such as knee and shoulder aspirations, steroid injections, abscess incision and drainage, and suturing.
* Diagnosed and treated numerous acute and chronic conditions, such as hypertension, diabetes, hyperlipidemia, and chronic pain.
* Coordinated care with traveling specialists given limited resources in a rural area.

**Internal Medicine Clinical Rotation**

Rocky Mountain Senior Care / Colorado Springs, CO / August, 2018

Month-long clinical rotation in several skilled nursing facilities located in Denver and Colorado Springs under the supervision of numerous physicians.

* Gained experience in long term care for patients of varying ages and needs, from severe disability to end of life care.

Publications

Merrick DT, Edwards MG, Franklin WA, et al. Altered Cell-Cycle Control, Inflammation, and Adhesion in High-Risk Persistent Bronchial Dysplasia. Cancer Res. 2018;78(17):4971-4983.

Barón AE, Kako S, Feser WJ, et al. Clinical Utility of Chromosomal Aneusomy in Individuals at High Risk of Lung Cancer. J Thorac Oncol. 2017;12(10):1512-1523.

Noonan SA, Berry L, Lu X, et al. Identifying the Appropriate FISH Criteria for Defining MET Copy Number-Driven Lung Adenocarcinoma through Oncogene Overlap Analysis. J Thorac Oncol. 2016;11(8):1293-1304.

Cascalho M, Huynh D, Lefferts AR, et al. Durable targeting of B-lymphocytes in living mice. Sci Rep. 2018;8(1):11143.

Platt JL, Cascalho M et al. New and old technologies for organ replacement. Curr Opin Organ Transplant. 2013;18(2):179-85.

Platt JL, Tsuji S, Cascalho M et al. Novel functions of B cells in transplantation. Curr Opin Organ Transplant. 2011;16(1):61-8.

Professional Experience

**Clinical Research Assistant**

University of Colorado Pathology Department / Aurora, CO /

October, 2012-July, 2017

Performed clinical research for the SPORE (Special Programs of Research Excellence) lab at the University of Colorado, organized and funded by the National Cancer Institute. Supervised by Adrie van Bokhoven, PhD and Daniel Merrick, MD.

* Screened and consented patients for various chemoprevention

trials and studies.

* Collected and processed frozen and fixed tissue, blood, urine and

sputum from subjects enrolled in SPORE thoracotomy studies.

* Attended bronchoscopy procedures to meet with patients, collect

biopsies, brushings, lavages, blood and urine from subjects

enrolled in SPORE bronchoscopy studies.

* Attended interventional radiology procedures to consent patients

and collect samples.

* Aggregated and organized clinical data from patient pathology

reports for statistical analysis.

* Utilized various techniques to prepare samples for distribution

(cryostat sectioning, staining, DNA and RNA extractions).

* Supervised a team of 5 undergraduate assistants.
* Assisted in design, migration of data and implementation of

new database system (OnCore).

**Research Assistant and Laboratory Manager**

University of Michigan Transplant Biology / Ann Arbor, MI /

July, 2008-August, 2012

Performed primary and translational research under the supervision of Jeffrey Platt, MD and Marilia Cascalho, MD for a transplant biology laboratory at a major research institution, funded by the NIH and American Society of Transplantation

* Managed large colony of 25 strains of transgenic mice through

animal husbandry, PCR genotyping and record keeping.

* Investigated responses in immunologically compromised

transgenic mice to surgical injuries such as skin grafts, heart

transplants, pyloromyotomies and vagotomies.  Performed all

surgeries and post-surgical observation.

* Differentiated cell types via FACS flow cytometry on tissue

harvested from kidney, thymus and spleen of humans as well as

transgenic mice to determine cell distribution of the immune

system in subjects lacking various immunoglobulin components.

* Training and management of new lab members and undergraduates.

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Professional Experience / Continued

**Research Technologist and Laboratory Manager**

Michigan State University Neuroscience Department / East Lansing, MI / October, 2003-May, 2008

Performed primary research under the supervision of Marc Breedlove, PhD and Cynthia Jordan, PhD in the neuroscience department of a major research institution, with funding from the NIH and NIMH.

* Explored the immunological and developmental implications of the

fraternal birth order effect.

* Prenatally modified mouse litters to alter sex ratios using blastocyst

flushing and implantation in mice with the green fluorescent

protein transgene linked to the X chromosome in order to amplify

the fraternal birth order effect in a mouse model.

* Solely responsible for developing and executing novel protocols for immunocytochemistry, ELISA and Western immunoblotting assays

to identify potential antigens in neural, gonadal, and muscle tissue.

* Sectioned (cryostat, microtome and paraffin-embedded) brain,

spinal cord and muscle as well as tissue processing.

* Managed and maintained green fluorescent protein transgenic

mouse colony through animal husbandry, PCR genotyping, and

record keeping.

* Performed survival and non-survival animal microsurgeries such as

ovariectomies and orchidectomies, perfusions, tissue

harvesting (muscle, brain and spinal cord) and blood collection.

* Performed extensive microscopy analysis including Purkinje cell

counts in in the cerebellum and soma size determination of

neurons in the medial amygdala.

* Responsible for analysis of all data.
* Performed all general lab maintenance tasks such as ordering,

equipment upkeep, training and oversight of undergraduate

research assistants and graduate students, maintenance of three

transgenic core colonies including genotyping, and hazardous and radioactive

waste disposal.

Publications

Martel MM, Klump K, Nigg JT, Breedlove SM, Sisk CL et al. Potential hormonal mechanisms of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder and major depressive disorder: a new perspective. Horm Behav. 2009;55(4):465-79.

Zuloaga DG, Puts DA, Jordan CL, Breedlove SM et al. The role of androgen receptors in the masculinization of brain and behavior: what we've learned from the testicular feminization mutation. Horm Behav. 2008;53(5):613-26.

Puts DA, Jordan CL, Breedlove SM et al. O brother, where art thou? The fraternal birth-order effect on male sexual orientation. Proc Natl Acad Sci USA. 2006;103(28):10531-2.

Morris JA, Jordan CL, Dugger BN, Breedlove SM et al. Partial demasculinization of several brain regions in adult male (XY) rats with a dysfunctional androgen receptor gene. J Comp Neurol. 2005;487(2):217-26.