

## Laos Medical Associate

### Author profiles:

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Khampho Thammavongxay Ohno, MPH, PA-C is a family medicine physician assistant. She received her Bachelor of Medicine from Guangxi Medical University, China and Master of Clinical Health Services degree to become a physician assistant and a Master of Public Health with concentration in Global Health from University of Washington in Seattle. Previously, she has worked for the Lao National Unexploded Ordnance training program (UXO Lao) as a medical coordinator, an AusAID project as primary health care officer in Houaphan Province (Laos), and with the WHO/EPI program in Laos as a technical assistant.



### General Information:

In Laos (officially the Lao People's Democratic Republic), the midlevel health care worker, known as the Medical Associate, began in the 1990s. The profession became less active over time and was reestablished in 2010.

### Entry Criteria:

The MA programs require a high school degree for entrance. No clinical hours or entrance examination is required.

#### Education:

There are three MA programs in Laos. They are located in the College of Health Sciences in Luang Prabang, Savannakhet and Champassack. Medical Associates are chosen after they complete high school from villages representing all the districts in the country and are sent for training. These upper-secondary-school students spend about 3 years in training at one of the Colleges of Health Science (Mid to High-Level Certificate). There are approximately 200 graduates per year.

Upon successful completion of the MA program, a certificate of completion is conferred however, progress is being made toward a bachelor's degree level program.

#### Financing Education:

Education is financed by public taxes that are overseen by the Ministry of Health.

#### Accrediting/Regulatory Bodies:

At this time, there is no regulation or accreditation of the profession. However, the profession is recognized and supported by the Ministry of Health, under the District Health Office.

#### Professional Licensure:

At this time, there is not a certifying exam or a system for licensing.

#### Scope of Practice:

The scope of practice includes basic primary care including preventive and ambulatory care, dispensing of medications, immunizations, and prenatal care.

#### Maintaining Role:

There are no continuing education requirements.

#### Job Opportunities:

The number of Medical Assistants in Laos and current employment opportunities are currently unknown.

#### References:

1. Quella, A. AAPA. Physician Assistant Training in Laos. Accessed February 25, 2021. <https://journals.lww.com/jaapa/blog/musings/pages/post.aspx?PostID=101>
2. Yoon, H. B.; Shin, J. S.; Boupavanh, K.; Kang, Y. M. Evaluation of a continuing professional development training program for physicians and physician assistants in hospitals in Laos based on the Kirkpatrick model. Journal of educational evaluation for health professions 2016;13():212016