

Direct Patient Care VS Healthcare Experience:

Healthcare Experience (HCE)

Involves working in a healthcare setting without directly participating in patient examination, treatment, or procedures. These roles build general healthcare knowledge but do not involve physically assessing or treating patients.

Examples of HCE roles:

- Medical scribe (observing exams, but not performing any)
- Medical receptionist (scheduling, patient check-in)
- Hospital transporter (moving patients, no assessment)
- Unit clerk (paperwork, communication with care team)
- Pharmacy technician (medication dispensing, not patient-facing in an exam context)
- Phlebotomist – (performs venipuncture)
- Health educator (counseling, but not clinical exams)
- “Technicians” [i.e. surgery, patient care] (that do not physically assess the patient)
- Caregiver

Direct Patient Care (DPC)

Involves actively participating in patient examination, treatment, or procedures. These roles typically include physical interaction with the patient—taking vitals, performing tests, assisting in procedures—which is critical to developing clinical judgment.

Examples of DPC roles:

- Certified nursing assistant (CNA) – bathing, vital signs, assisting with mobility
- Medical assistant (clinical) – taking vitals, preparing patients for exams, collecting samples
- EMT/Paramedic – assessing and stabilizing patients
- ER tech – wound care, splinting, assisting physicians
- PT/OT Assistant (with hands-on care) – assisting with therapeutic exercises
- LPN or RN – administering meds, physical assessments
- Ophthalmology Technician- assessing vision

Key Differences (with a focus on patient examination):

Aspect	Healthcare Experience (HCE)	Direct Patient Care (DPC)
Patient Contact	Indirect or observational	Hands-on, physical interaction
Patient Examination	Not involved in exams	Actively involved in exams or treatment
Clinical Skill Use	Minimal or none	Frequent and direct
Examples	Scribe, clerk, pharmacy tech	CNA, EMT, MA

Tip for Applicants:

When logging experience, ask: "Did I physically examine, assess, treat, or directly assist with a patient's care?"

If yes → it's likely DPC. If not → it's likely HCE.