



PHOTO BY TERESA MULLINS

Being a physician assistant appealed to Nick Sluss because he likes the hands-on patient care while having a physician to turn to if needed.

## Job lets Sluss help others, remain in home community

<sup>12364</sup>  
**BY TERESA MULLINS**  
 ★ STAFF WRITER FRONT PAGE

CLINTWOOD — Nick Sluss says his job offers a unique opportunity to help others, have a fulfilling career and stay in the community he loves.

At nearly 26, Nick Sluss, who has dark hair, brown eyes and a brilliant smile, has returned to his hometown to practice as a physician assistant.

Sluss, who is the son of Joe Glenn and Rhonda Sluss, recently began practicing at Community Medical Care, one of five clinics owned by Lebanon-based physician Dr. Samina Yousuf.

And although the clinic has been open only a little more than a month, Sluss said he has already learned that many folks are

uncertain what a physician assistant does.

A physician assistant is a mid-level health care provider who is trained in practicing medicine under the supervision of a physician. Although the laws vary by state, in Virginia, Sluss can draw blood work for lab tests, do electrocardiograms, write orders for medical tests, interpret lab test results and write prescriptions. He is not allowed, however, to pronounce death or complete certain forms.

After graduating from Clintwood High School in 2000, Sluss first considered pursuing a career in occupational therapy. But after attending a year at Emory and Henry college, he realized that although he wanted to work in the medical field, he didn't want to be a

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therapist. So he transferred to Southwest Virginia Community College with the intent of taking courses needed to attend Jefferson College of Health Sciences, the closest school in Virginia with a physician assistant program.

Being a physician assistant appealed to Sluss because he likes the hands-on patient care

while having the physician to turn to if needed, he said.

Sluss spent two years in the P.A. program and graduated with a bachelor of science degree with a physician assistant concentration. The longer he was away from home, the more he longed to return to his hometown.

Day-to-day functions for a physician assistant are quite similar to that of a nurse practitioner, Sluss said. The great-

est difference between the two fields is in the training, he explained. Nurse practitioners must obtain a nursing license before entering the program, which is based on a nursing model. Physician assistants are trained on a medical model, Sluss said. Pre-requisites for the two programs are also different.

Once he completed the physician assistant program, Sluss had

to pass a rigorous exam, the Physician Assistant National Certification Exam, before he could practice. But his training will never end. Now he must have continuing education retraining bi-annually and must retake the PANCE every six years to remain certified.

Sluss said a doctor will be present at Community Medical Care part of the time, and is always accessible by phone.