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PREPARING FOR EMPLOYMENT

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PREFACE

Medical Assisting: Administrative and Clinical Competencies, Ninth Edition is a proven, competency-based learning system with a 35-year history of success. It is written in an interesting, easy-to-understand format and covers the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and values necessary to prepare you to become a thriving, multiskilled medical assistant. It can be used in a variety of settings:

- For a structured classroom setting, with the expertise of a qualified instructor
- For individualized instruction of learning in programs of diversified training because much of the content and format are appropriate for self-study
- For on-the-job training in a provider's office, where the learning package serves as a supplement to employee instruction and as a resource manual
- For review by medical assistants who wish to prepare for certification exams

HOW THE TEXT IS ORGANIZED

The entire learning system—which includes a variety of print and digital components for all learner types—is designed to be an interactive guide as you embark on a career in medical assisting. Information is presented in five major sections: foundational knowledge, anatomy and physiology, front office tasks, back office tasks, and preparing for employment. These sections are further divided into 15 units with 58 chapters. Each chapter is designed in a similar fashion: first providing student focus through Objectives and Words to Know; then presenting concepts and any relevant Procedures; and ending with a Summary and Check Your Understanding quiz for students to assess what they have learned.

FEATURES

The key features in this text are designed to support learning, show real-world context of chapter concepts, and walk students through performing new skills. The following is a brief description of key features:

- **Objectives:** Each chapter begins with a list of objectives presented in categories of Knowledge Base, Skills, and Behaviors.
- **Words to Know:** A list of key terms appears at the start of each chapter, and each key term is presented in boldface, explained within the text, and defined in the glossary.
- **Practical Application:** Embedded throughout the chapters, the Practical Application feature highlights important information to know when working in the medical practice.
- **Procedures:** Skills are presented step-by-step with detailed instructions. Behavioral (affective) skills are

called out within the Procedures with an icon **B** and with additional criteria for students to understand how to demonstrate behavioral competencies. Documentation examples are also included with Procedures when applicable.

- **Summary:** Quick bulleted summaries help students study and review the chapter.
- **Check Your Understanding:** 10-question quizzes at the end of each chapter provide an assessment of the students' achievement of learning objectives.
- **Curriculum Correlations:** To meet the latest curriculum standards for medical assisting programmatic accreditation, mapping tools are included on the Companion Site.

NEW TO THIS EDITION

The ninth edition has been revised and updated to make it even more accessible, logical, and innovative for today's dynamic health care environment:

- **New Chapters:** Added new chapters on Professionalism (Chapter 2), Geriatrics (Chapter 39), and Mental Health (Chapter 40).
- **New Feature Elements:** Expanded and updated the Practical Application feature, which highlights the practical application of concepts in the medical office. Many of the Practical Application tips focus on professionalism and soft skills.
- **Combined Chapters:** Some chapters have been combined to streamline the material and simplify learning:
 - Chapter 1: The Medical Assistant, Health Care Team, and Medical Environment was formerly Chapter 1: The Medical Assistant and Chapter 2: The Health Care Team and the Medical Environment, Past and Present
 - Chapter 3: Legal and Ethical Issues was formerly Chapter 3: Legal Issues and Chapter 4: Ethical Issues
 - Chapter 4: Applying Communication Skills was formerly Chapter 5: Verbal and Nonverbal Communication and Chapter 6: Applying Communication Skills
 - Chapter 5: Medical Terminology was formerly Chapter 7: Introduction to Medical Terminology and Chapter 8: Understanding and Building Medical Terms of Body Systems
- **Restructured Revenue Cycle Management Unit:** The Revenue Cycle Management Unit has been restructured to correlate with the steps of the revenue cycle in a real medical setting.
- **Skills and Procedures:** eight new procedures and many newly revised procedures covering general, administrative, and clinical competencies.
- **Procedure Layout:** Criteria have been added to all behavioral (affective) steps in Procedures. These

criteria provide guidance for the student on how to demonstrate behavioral competencies and provide guidance to the instructor on evaluating students.

- *Today's Topics and Trends:* Some of the new topics include COVID-19, mental health, and patients who are older. (A complete list of new topics follows in the next section.)

NEW TOPICS IN THE NINTH EDITION BY UNIT

UNIT 1: INTRODUCTION TO HEALTH CARE

- Expansion on medical scribing (Chapter 1)
- New Chapter 2: Professionalism, including:
 - Additional content on integrity
 - Revised procedures for 2–1: Demonstrate Professional Behavior and 2–2: Demonstrate Accountability and Professional Appearance
- Employer versus personal liability insurance (Chapter 3)
- Updated information on the Affordable Care Act (ACA) (Chapter 3)
- Guidance on HIPAA and COVID-19 (Chapter 3)
- Information on contact tracing (Chapter 3)

UNIT 2: ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY OF THE HUMAN BODY

- Additional content to summarize the six levels of structural organization that make up the human body (Chapter 6)
- Additional content explaining how the lymphatic and immune systems are connected (Chapter 14)

UNIT 3: BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS

- Additional content about how to coach patients in obtaining community resources (Chapter 19)
- Additional content discussing importance of written communication skills in the professional setting (Chapter 20)
- Additional content about patient portals (Chapter 21)

UNIT 4: BEGINNING THE PATIENT'S RECORD

- Additional and updated content on electronic health records (Chapter 23)
- New content on Medicare Promoting Interoperability (PI) Program (Chapter 23)

UNIT 5: MEDICAL INSURANCE AND CODING

- Practical Application feature demonstrating professionalism when communicating with patients and providers about billing and payments (Chapter 24)
- Practical Application feature for utilizing tactful communication skills with medical providers (Chapter 25)

UNIT 6: THE REVENUE CYCLE

- Outline of the revenue cycle from beginning to end (Chapter 26)
- Additional content visualizing the lifecycle of a claim (Chapter 27)
- Updated content pertaining to debit and credit cards (Chapter 29)

UNIT 7: PREPARING FOR CLINICAL PROCEDURES

- New Procedure 31–1: Participate in Blood-Borne Pathogen Training (Chapter 31)
- Precautions to suppress the transmission of COVID-19 (Chapter 31)
- Case studies showing dialogue between the medical assistant and patient for in-person screening and health history (Chapter 32)
- Korotkoff sounds with blood pressure (Chapter 33)

UNIT 8: ASSISTING WITH EXAMINATIONS

- New Procedure 36–11: Perform Neurological Testing as Part of a Diabetic Foot Examination (Chapter 36)
- New Procedure 38–3: Measure and Record Rectal Temperature with an Electronic Thermometer (Chapter 38)
- New Chapter 39: Geriatrics, including:
 - Table 39–1: Physical Changes of Aging throughout the Body Systems and Health Promotion
 - Table 39–2: Common Diseases/Conditions for Geriatric Patients
 - Safety measures for older adults and housing options available
 - The medical assistant's responsibilities and traits required for working with older patients
 - Practical Application features describing federal government programs available for older adults, and managing social isolation and loneliness with older adults
- New Chapter 40: Mental Health, including:
 - Table 40–1: Common Diagnostic Categories of Mental Disorders
 - Table 40–2: Common Treatments for Mental Disorders
 - Procedure 40–1: Respond to Abnormal Behavior Patterns
 - Description of the medical assistant's role in mental health
 - Substance abuse
 - Suicide, risk of suicide, suicide prevention, and screenings

UNIT 9: LABORATORY PROCEDURES

- Chapter introduction with information on instructing patients with specimen collection, documentation, and lab results (Chapter 42)

UNIT 10: CARDIOLOGY AND RADIOLOGY PROCEDURES

- Additional information on the Holter monitor (Chapter 45)

UNIT 12: MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION PROCEDURES

- COVID-19 symptoms, treatment, and incubation period (Chapter 52)
- Additional content on vaccine reaction or side effects versus vaccine injury, VCF program, regulations for vaccinations and attending schools, and religious and personal beliefs regarding vaccination exemptions (Chapter 52)

UNIT 13: FIRST AID AND RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES

- Additional content about the office policy manual and roles and responsibilities in an emergency (Chapter 53)

UNIT 15: WORKPLACE READINESS

- Samples of electronic job applications (Chapter 57)
- Answering behavioral questions and asking questions at a job interview (Chapter 57)
- Considerations when accepting a job offer (Chapter 57)
- Social media policy in the workplace (Chapter 58)

COMPLETE LEARNING SYSTEM: STUDENT SUPPLEMENTS

WORKBOOK

(ISBN 978-1-3379-0987-7)

Review and practice key concepts and skills through Words to Know Challenges, Review Questions, and Application Activities for each chapter. The Workbook has been fully revised to align with the content in the ninth edition. Use the Procedures section to evaluate performance of the textbook procedures and see how these procedures map to current, specific ABHES and CAAHEP curriculum standards.

The procedures have been completely reformatted to match the textbook procedures exactly and provide instruction to download the specific material needed to complete the procedure. Procedure Forms can be downloaded from the Companion Site, and scenario information for Procedures can be found in the Instructor Manual. Competency Practice activities for each Procedure can also be found in the Workbook Chapter Worksheets.

COMPANION SITE

(login.cengage.com)

This Companion Site provides students with the resources they will need to complete the Procedures. When applicable, Procedure Forms are provided for the relevant Procedures. The Procedure Forms can be completed electronically and saved, or printed and completed manually.

MINDTAP TO ACCOMPANY *MEDICAL ASSISTING: ADMINISTRATIVE AND CLINICAL COMPETENCIES, NINTH EDITION*

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Michelle Blesi is a Certified Medical Assistant with 14 years of industry experience, who worked in the family practice area for 10 years, emphasizing clinical and laboratory skills. She then changed her focus to leadership, working as a lead in the Nursing/Lab department and as a Clinical Manager. She has a diploma in Medical Assisting and is certified through the AAMA. She also

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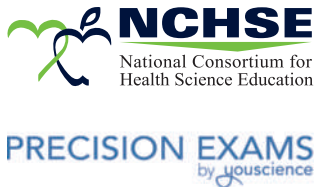
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Virginia Ferrari brings more than 25 years of administrative skills and hands-on application in practice management to her writing. In addition, she is a lead author of Cengage Learning's *The Paperless Medical Office: Using Harris CareTracker*, a contributing author for both the seventh and eighth editions of *Medical Assisting: Administrative and Clinical Competencies*, and the second edition of *Clinical Medical Assisting: A Professional, Field Smart Approach to the Workplace*. Virginia has taught medical billing and coding at the community college and career college level and has been a practice manager for internal medicine, and content strategist for allied health professions. Virginia holds dual undergraduate degrees in sociology and family and consumer studies, a master's degree in health administration, and certifications from the National Healthcareer Association.

K12

This edition of *Medical Assisting: Administrative & Clinical Competencies* is aligned to Precision Exams' *Health Science* Career Cluster. The *Health Science* pathway connects industry with skills taught in the classroom to help students successfully transition from high school to college and/or career. Working together, Precision Exams and National Geographic Learning/Cengage focus on preparing students for the workforce,

with exams and content that is kept up to date and relevant to today's jobs. To access a corresponding correlation guide, visit the accompanying Instructor Companion Website for this title. For more information on how to administer the **Medical Assistant—Medical Office Management** exam, **Medical Assistant—Clinical and Laboratory Procedures** exam, or any of the 170+ exams available to your students, contact your local NGL/Cengage Sales Consultant.



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expertise and am honored to have such a great partner and friend contributing to this edition. Virginia brings current and relevant details to all of the administrative chapters in this text and has been integral in updating the administrative information throughout. I am blessed to have had the opportunity to continue to work with her.

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–Cengage Author: Michelle Blesi

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–Cengage Author: Virginia Ferrari

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SECTION 1

Medical Assisting Foundations

Unit 1

INTRODUCTION TO HEALTH CARE

Chapter 1: The Medical Assistant, Health Care Team and Medical Environment

Chapter 2: Professionalism

Chapter 3: Legal and Ethical Issues

Chapter 4: Applying Communication Skills

Chapter 5: Introduction to Medical Terminology

The health care industry is one of the oldest and most respected professions in the world. The field of medicine has been around for thousands of years, dating as far back as 3000 BC. Some scientists even suspect that medicinal properties were used far before the first documented findings. Medical pioneers paved the way for today's engineers to create innovative technology and medications that cure and treat some of the most complex of diseases. Because of these innovations, our quality of life is much better, and the average life span has increased by several years.

The evolution and specialization of medicine has encouraged many health care specialties and subspecialties to emerge, even creating several tiers of practitioners to work in each area. Medical assisting not only continues to be one of the fastest-growing health care occupations today but is also among the most versatile careers.

Chapter 1 explores the skills and responsibilities of the medical assistant; discusses various credentialing opportunities; discusses the providers, midlevel practitioners, and allied health professionals that comprise the health care team; and investigates the various types of medical establishments in which these professionals work.

Chapter 2 discusses the various aspects of and the importance of professionalism in the field of medical assisting. Professional traits and characteristics are not an option but an expectation in the medical community. Various levels of professionalism include but are not limited to the way in which we dress, how we utilize our time, and how we behave in our interpersonal relations. Acting professionally is one of the most important skills a medical assistant will perform.

Chapter 3 covers the law and ethics that are involved in the field of medicine. There are not only legal aspects that govern how we conduct our business but many ethical issues that play into our interactions and patient care. Having an understanding of the law and what it entails as well as having ethical principles is essential in our role as a medical assistant.

Chapter 4 discusses communication skills and how we will apply those skills in the work environment. Communications take place with every interaction we have in the medical setting. Being an excellent communicator is key to a therapeutic interaction for all parties involved.

Chapter 5 will introduce you to the language of medicine. Some consider medical terminology to be its own language. Learning the language that is so critical in the medical field is another essential skill you must master in your role as a MA.

1

The Medical Assistant, Health Care Team, and Medical Environment

OBJECTIVES

In this chapter, you will learn the following:

KB Knowledge Base

1. Spell and define, using the glossary, all the Words to Know in this chapter.
2. Describe the role of the medical assistant.
3. List the general responsibilities and skills of the medical assistant.
4. Define patient navigator.
5. Describe the role of the medical assistant as a patient navigator.
6. Intervene on behalf of the patient regarding issues/concerns that may arise, for example, insurance policy information, medical bills, physician/provider orders, and so on.
7. Partner with health care teams to attain optimal patient health outcomes.
8. Define the principles of self-boundaries.
9. Describe the current employment outlook for the medical assistant.
10. Summarize licensure, accreditation, certification, and registration.
11. Identify the various types of medical centers.
12. Describe alternatives to the traditional medical model.
13. Compare licensure and certification requirements of allied health professionals.
14. Describe the duties of various health care professionals.
15. Explain how the medical assistant will work alongside various types of allied health professions.
16. Describe the role of government legislation and organizations in health care.

WORDS TO KNOW

accreditation	Certified Medical Assistant, CMA (AAMA)	medical assistant	patient-centered medical home (PCMH)
Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES)	clinical skills	medical biller	patient navigator
acupuncture	Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP)	medical coder	Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
administrative skills	complementary alternative medicine (CAM)	medical office manager	phlebotomists
advocate	doctor of osteopathic medicine (DO)	midlevel practitioner	physician assistants (PAs)
American Academy of Professional Coders (AAPC)	doctor of medicine (MD)	multi-provider clinic	placebo effect
American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA)	doctorate	National Center for Competency Testing (NCCT)	provider
American Medical Technologists (AMT)	epidemic	National Certified Medical Assistant (NCMA)	reciprocity
ayurvedic medicine	general skills	National Certified Medical Office Assistant (NCMOA)	Registered Medical Assistant, RMA (AMT)
biofeedback	generalist	National Healthcareer Association (NHA)	revocation
Certified Clinical Medical Assistant (CCMA)	Hippocratic oath	naturopathy	scope of practice
Certified Medical Administrative Assistant (CMAA)	homeopathy	nurse anesthetist	scribe
	hospitalist	nurse midwife	solo practice
	magnet therapy	nurse practitioner (NP)	tact
		partnership	urgent care center

THE ROLE OF THE MEDICAL ASSISTANT

The field of medical assisting is one of the most versatile allied health occupations in today's health care environment. A medical assistant will perform routine administrative and clinical tasks in a variety of offices and clinics of physicians, nurse practitioners, and other health care providers such as podiatrists and chiropractors. They are also employed in general medical and surgical hospitals including private and state facilities. The duties assumed by the medical assistant will vary according to the location, specialty, and type of practice or setting. The **medical assistant** is also a liaison between the doctor and the patient and is of vital importance to the success of the medical practice.

To become a successful medical assistant, you must acquire a specific knowledge base (theory) and skills (procedures) while also demonstrating specific behaviors (professional characteristics or attitudes).

IS MEDICAL ASSISTING RIGHT FOR YOU?

How do you know whether medical assisting is right for you? According to the **American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA)**—a professional organization for medical assistants—if you can answer yes to the following questions, medical assisting is probably for you:

- Are you looking for a meaningful job?
- Do you like helping others (Figure 1–1)?
- Do you have an interest in health and medicine?
- Are you a “people person”?
- Are you good at multitasking—switching tasks throughout the workday?
- Do you like variety in your job?
- Would you like to enter a career in an expanding field?
- The following sections describe some of the specific responsibilities of medical assistants.



Figure 1–1: The medical assistant assists the patient with a gown.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MEDICAL ASSISTANT

As health care progresses, so do the knowledge, skills, and responsibilities of the medical assistant. The field of medical assisting is continuously evolving. In an effort to keep up with the changes, the AAMA routinely completes an occupational analysis, which identifies critical responsibilities performed by CMAs (AAMA). The most updated version of the analysis can be found on the AAMA website by accessing www.aama-ntl.org. The analysis is used as a marketing tool and resource for CMA (AAMA) educators as well as CMAs working in the field. Although this analysis is performed specifically for members of the AAMA, the skills listed are applicable to all medical assistants across the spectrum. The data provided from this document is used for multiple purposes such as assisting the Continuing Education Board (CEB) and the Medical Assisting Education Review Board (MAERB) in updating their documents. Additionally, it guides the Certifying Board (CB) in the development of the content outline of the CMA (AAMA) Certification/Recertification Exam, which is divided into three content areas. The areas are identified as general, administrative, and clinical. Mastery of the skills that fall under those categories prepares medical assisting students to be integral members of today's health care team. The **American Medical Technologists (AMT)** website also supplies a document of various tasks that medical assistants perform that are considered by the AMT to be representative of the medical assisting job role. This document can be accessed at www.americanmedtech.org.

GENERAL

Medical assistants must have wonderful communication skills and the ability to think critically and analyze information. The **general skills** of the medical assistant are necessary regardless of whether you are working in a clinical or administrative capacity and are included in the areas of psychology, communication, professionalism, medical law/regulatory guidelines, medical ethics, risk management, quality assurance and safety, and medical terminology. Some of the skills are highlighted and expanded on below:

- **Communication:** The medical assistant should take on the role of a communication liaison when working with patients. Being able to relate therapeutic and adaptive responses to diverse populations is critical. These skills are necessary to promote important exchanges of information between the **provider** (physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant) and the patient. Good interpersonal skills also promote positive interaction with coworkers, supervisors, and external associates that conduct business with the practice.

- **Medical law/regulatory guidelines and medical ethics:** These are concepts concerned with legal, ethical, and moral conduct in the execution of medical assisting duties. Understanding of the various laws and regulatory guidelines will help prevent unnecessary litigation and keep the medical assistant practicing within their scope of practice.
- **Professionalism:** Professional behavior such as displaying **tact** (being able to say the right thing at the right time), diplomacy, courtesy, respect, and dignity are the utmost important skills of a medical assistant. Demonstrating responsibility in all aspects of the job and promoting integrity and honesty are also an integral part of this career. As a medical assistant you must display a professional image and be able to respond to criticism by reflecting on the feedback and creating a change for the betterment of you.

Demonstrating Professionalism

Being a part of the health care team requires the medical assistant to demonstrate professionalism and professional behavior on an array of levels. Evolving into a professional is not something that just happens; it is a process that develops throughout one's career. As discussed earlier, professional behaviors such as displaying tact, diplomacy, courtesy, respect, and dignity, as well as demonstrating responsibility in all aspects of the job and promoting integrity and honesty, are also an integral part of this career. One of the most important traits of a medical professional is selflessness—an unselfish concern for the welfare of others. As a health care professional, you should display professionalism not only to patients but also to supervisors, coworkers, vendors, and outside business associates. Chapter 2 will discuss in detail desirable characteristics and behaviors of a professional medical assistant.



Figure 1–2: The medical assistant acts as a health coach as she reviews important information within the patient brochure.

ADMINISTRATIVE

Performing **administrative skills** helps manage the business affairs of the practice and includes categories such as medical reception, patient navigator/advocate, medical business practices, establishing patient medical records, scheduling appointments and practice finances. Some of the skills listed under these categories are:

- Medical record preparation
- Demographic data review
- Providing resource information
- Office supply inventory
- Equipment maintenance
- Accounts receivable/payable, payment receipts; manage petty cash, CPT/ICD-CM coding, and insurance claims

Quick Tips

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

In many facilities, the medical assistant accompanies the provider in the examination room and records the findings. According to the Joint Commission, the term **scribe** is given to an unlicensed individual hired to enter information into the electronic health record (EHR) or chart at the direction of a physician or licensed independent practitioner. To perform this duty well, it is important to have sound knowledge in medical terminology, anatomy, and physiology in addition to good spelling and writing skills.

PATIENT EDUCATION

Today's medical assistants are becoming more active in patient education by taking on the role of a health coach (Figure 1–2). Topics frequently covered with patients include disease prevention, health maintenance, and medication management. To be at the top of your game, always check with the provider before conducting these sessions to determine essential goals for the session. Start each session by allowing the patient or patient's family members to identify their goals as well for the session. Researching this information prior to the session enhances the learning process and aids in overall patient compliance.



CLINICAL

Performing **clinical skills**, which vary by state laws, is an extension of the provider's role of assessment, examination, diagnosis, and treatment. These are divided into several areas, which include anatomy and physiology,

infection control, patient intake and documentation of care, patient preparation and assisting the provider, nutrition, collecting and processing specimens, diagnostic testing, pharmacology, and emergency management/basic first aid. Some skills from this category include:

- Application of principles of aseptic technique and infection control
- Performance of vital signs
- Performance of sterilization and minor surgery procedures
- Collection and processing of specimens
- Performance of lab tests (Figure 1–3)
- Performance of electrocardiograms (ECGs or EKGs)
- Administration of medications
- Performance of phlebotomy procedures
- Performance of patient screenings
- Preparation of patients for examinations, procedures, and treatments
- Response to emergencies

Many medical assistants work as **generalists**, meaning that they perform both clinical and administrative duties in addition to general responsibilities. Some



Figure 1–3: In this figure, the medical assistant is performing one of the many lab tests medical assistants routinely perform.

Quick Tips

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

The evolving role of the medical assistant has some practices utilizing them in the role of patient **advocate** or **patient navigator**. The duties of a patient advocate/navigator may include explaining insurance policy information and financial information, taking complaints from patients, and helping patients understand their medical rights. Under the provider's supervision or per physician/provider orders, the patient advocate/navigator may conduct a preplanning visit with the patient prior to the office visit to assist with the visit agenda, obtain a basic history including medication use, and document any needed tests that are due. During the office visit, the provider may have the advocate/navigator assist with filling out documents and ordering laboratory tests and radiograph studies that would need to be performed at an outside facility. Assisting with referrals, transportation assistance, or obtaining information from pharmaceutical companies regarding financial assistance with prescriptions is also a role the advocate/navigator may provide. Upon completion of the visit, the advocate/navigator may seek to ensure that patients understand what took place during the visit and engage the patient in managing their health care to enhance the patient's experience with the visit. These role changes have been put in place to increase the quality and effectiveness of patient care.

Scope of practice

Inside scope of practice

- Perform diagnostic testing with physician's order
- Patient screening
- Obtain patient history
- Obtain chief complaint
- Patient prep
- Obtain vital signs



Outside scope of practice

- Physical assessment
- Diagnostic test without an order
- Diagnosing
- Prescribing



Figure 1–4: Performing within your scope of practice means working within the boundaries of what you are legally and ethically allowed to do as a medical assistant.

medical assistants specialize in administrative procedures, whereas others prefer working in clinical positions exclusively.

BOUNDARIES OF MEDICAL ASSISTANTS

Medical assistants must know the principles of self-boundaries, or **scope of practice**, of the profession (Figure 1–4). In general, medical assistants cannot examine, diagnose, or prescribe treatment, but can perform duties mentioned earlier in the chapter. Each state has its own medical practice act that may dictate responsibilities such as what types of medications medical assistants can administer and whether additional credentialing is required to take radiographs. Be sure and check with your individual state guidelines if questions arise. Chapter 3 expands on the medical assistant's scope of practice.

MEDICAL ASSISTANT WORK ENVIRONMENT

Medical assistants work in a variety of settings, although the majority of them work in ambulatory care environments. Some of the types of practices in which medical assistants work include doctor offices, specialty practices, urgent care centers, clinics, hospitals, labs, insurance companies, billing companies, and government agencies. The actual business of practicing medicine in these organizations can be conducted in several ways.

SOLO PRACTICES

Some providers prefer to have a **solo practice**, also called a sole proprietorship, meaning that the individual provider alone makes all decisions regarding the practice. Being employed as a medical assistant in this type of office may require you to have both administrative and clinical skills, which are essential for the smooth operation of that practice, especially if you are the only employee. This type of businesses is rare today because of the expenses involved in running a business.

PARTNERSHIPS

In a **partnership**, two or more providers have a legal agreement to share in the total business operation of the practice. In this case, usually two or more medical assistants (or other members of the health care team) are employed to care for patients and conduct business.

MULTI-PROVIDER CLINICS

Multi-provider clinics are group practices, which consist of three or more providers who share a facility for the purpose of practicing medicine. In this type of practice, the providers share expenses, income, equipment, records, and personnel. Many times, these practices are owned by hospitals, management groups, or insurance companies. Usually, several professionals make up the health care team in this setting. Medical assistants, lab technicians, radiology technicians, nurses, physician assistants, and the physician work together in providing health care.

URGENT CARE CENTERS

Urgent care centers are ambulatory care centers that take care of patients with acute illness or injury and those with minor emergencies. These centers originated in the 1970s and have grown in popularity over the past couple of decades. Urgent care facilities are usually open seven days a week and are especially busy during times when other clinics and offices are closed. Patients are normally seen in the order of arrival except in emergencies. Many of these centers are started by emergency room physicians and are equipped with radiographic equipment, lab equipment, splinting supplies,

and emergency equipment. Medical assistants with a limited X-ray license are often desirable because of their versatility.

MANAGED CARE OPERATIONS

Managed care is a system of health care that integrates the delivery and payment of health care for covered persons (patients, or subscribers) by contracting with selected providers for comprehensive health care services at a reduced cost. A main goal of managed care is to provide health care with an emphasis on prevention. Managed care organizations frequently contract with a group of health care providers such as HMOs and PPOs (preferred provider organizations). More on managed care will be discussed in Chapter 25.

ACCOUNTABLE CARE ORGANIZATION (ACO)

ACOs are groups of physicians, hospitals, and other health care providers, like the **Patient-Centered Medical Home PCMH** model discussed later in this chapter, who together coordinate high-quality care to their Medicare patients. As with the PCMH model, the goal of coordinated care is to ensure that patients get the correct care needed, avoiding duplication of services and preventing medical errors.

HOSPITALS

Medical assistants may serve a variety of roles within the hospital setting depending on individual state laws that govern their scope of practice. A medical assistant may be employed as a monitor tech in a hospital to watch EKG tracings for telemetry units where they must be certified in CPR and first aid; additionally they may work in emergency departments in much the same manner but also working directly with the patients for transport, glucose screening, rooming, and other such duties. They may serve as phlebotomists, unit clerks, and/or work in hospital-based practices such as wound clinics and satellite medical practices.

PATIENT-CENTERED MEDICAL HOME (PCMH)

The Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH) practice is responsible for providing for all of a patient's health care needs or appropriately arranging care with other qualified professionals. This includes the provision of preventive services, treatment of acute and chronic illness, and assistance with end-of-life issues. It is a model of practice in which a team of health professionals, coordinated by a personal provider, works collaboratively to provide high levels of care, access and communication, care coordination and integration, and care quality and safety.

The PCMH is more of a partnership between the PCMH team and patient. The provider oversees all of the patient's care and focuses on the patient's total

health rather than on a specific condition. Electronic medical records are a big part of the PCMH model, and patients have continuous access to their records in this model. Early findings have shown that patients thrive in this model, which helps reduce health care expenses. Medical assistants are very good for this model due to their flexibility and affordability, in addition to their ability to scribe to electronic health records (EHR) and medication administration records (MAR), which is due to the training they receive through higher education programs. For more information about this model, visit the website of the American College of Physicians (ACP) and Patient-Centered Primary Care Collaborative groups at www.emmisolutions.com/medicalhome.

Quick Tips

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Concierge (Boutique) Medical Practices or Direct Primary Care

(DPC) is becoming more and more popular throughout the United States. Under this system, patients pay an added fee (generally around \$100 per month) in exchange for more personalized care, better access to their providers for medical services, and 24/7 availability to the patient. Although there are differences in practices, they generally will offer similar services such as prevention screenings, wellness visits, diagnostic testing, and minor urgent care services, such as laceration repair or treatment for a sore throat. These services can be very cost beneficial for those patients with chronic illnesses that require more frequent visits, as there are no limits on care visits. Services that require more extensive treatment are not covered and would still require a comprehensive health care insurance plan for coverage.

JOB OUTLOOK FOR MEDICAL ASSISTANTS

The job outlook for medical assistants continues to be very promising. This is due to the versatility of medical assistants as well as to our aging population. The following excerpt is from the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics:

Employment of medical assistants is projected to grow 23 percent from 2018 to 2028, much faster than the average for all occupations. The growth of the aging baby-boom population will continue to increase demand for preventive medical services, which are often provided by physicians. As a result, physicians will hire more assistants to perform routine administrative and clinical duties, allowing the physicians to see more patients. The increasing prevalence of certain conditions, such as obesity and diabetes, also will increase demand for health care services and medical assistants. Increasing use of medical

assistants to allow providers to care for more patients will further stimulate job growth.

Refer to <http://www.bls.gov> for more information on medical assistants and job growth.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS FOR MEDICAL ASSISTANTS

A variety of organizations provide professional services for medical assistants, including credentialing and continuing education opportunities. Credentialing is the process of establishing the qualifications of certified and licensed medical professionals and assessing their background and legitimacy. These organizations help promote the field of medical assisting and provide support for medical assistants in their professional environments. Professional organizations offer educational programs that provide members with continuing education units (CEUs) that are necessary to stay current in the field as well as to retain certification. Being involved in a professional organization also provides opportunities for networking and professional discounts on an array of items, including professional liability insurance.

ACCREDITATION

Before discussing certifying organizations, we must first briefly describe the accreditation process. **Accreditation** is a process by which an educational institution or program establishes credibility or legitimacy by complying with predetermined standards. Accredited programs must meet or exceed established thresholds in areas such as certification examination pass rates, student graduation rates, and positive placement percentages. Two organizations that specifically accredit medical assisting programs (programmatic accreditation) are the **Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP)** and the **Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES)**. Schools may also be accredited at the institutional level (institutional accreditation). Some of the organizations that accredit institutions include the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS), the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC), the Accrediting Council for Continuing Education and Training (ACCET), and state departments of education. Some of these organizations are mentioned in the following sections.

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF MEDICAL ASSISTANTS

The American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA) (Figure 1–5) traces its roots to 1955. At that time, the primary purpose of the AAMA was to raise the standards of the medical assistant to a professional level. (Medical assisting wasn't a recognized career at that point.) Physicians realized then, as they do now,



Figure 1–5: AAMA logo. Reprinted with permission of the American Association of Medical Assistants.

that health care professionals were needed to assist them in a multitude of office duties for which nurses had not been trained. They also needed help in the physician-patient relationship. Today, medical assisting is formally recognized as an allied health profession, and educational programs are eligible for federal funding by the Bureau of Health Manpower. AAMA members receive a bimonthly magazine, *CMA Today*, which is devoted to educational articles written by experts in allied health and related fields. Legislation issues that affect the medical assistant's right to practice are often featured in this magazine.

Certification Examination

The AAMA offers certification testing for medical assisting graduates that meet specific prerequisites. The credential, **Certified Medical Assistant, CMA (AAMA)** is awarded to participants who successfully pass the AAMA's national certification exam. The credential was changed to include the (AAMA) addendum starting on January 1, 2008, to help differentiate the credential from similar health care certifications.

Graduates of medical assisting programs accredited by CAAHEP or ABHES are eligible to take the CMA (AAMA) certification exam. Tests are given throughout the year at various Prometric testing centers around the country. Each candidate is allowed a 90-day period in which to take the exam; refer to the AAMA website for specifics on detailed testing time lines. Areas of knowledge and topics covered in the exam are listed in the *CMA (AAMA) Certification/Recertification Examination Content Outline*, which can be found on the AAMA Website at www.aama-ntl.org.

As of January 1, 2010, all newly certified and recertifying CMAs (AAMA) are considered current for 60 months following the end of the calendar month of their initial certification or most recent recertification. (So, those taking their test on March 15, 2021, are considered current through March 31, 2026.)

Recertification reinforces the validity of the CMA credentials and helps maintain continued acceptance by providers, patients, and other health care professionals. This requirement may be met in one of two ways:

1. By earning 60 continuing education units or hours (of which 30 must be approved by the AAMA) or academic or other formal credit. The category breakdown of points must be as follows: 10 administrative, 10 clinical, 10 general, plus 30 from any combination of the categories.
2. By retaking the certification examination.



Figure 1–6: AMT logo. Courtesy of the American Medical Technologists.

AMERICAN MEDICAL TECHNOLOGISTS

The American Medical Technologists (AMT) organization (Figure 1–6) was founded in 1939 and is a certification and membership society for several allied health professionals, including medical assistants, medical laboratory technologists and technicians, phlebotomists, medical lab assistants, medical administrative specialists, and others. A national board of directors is elected to conduct the business of the organization such as educational programs, legal concerns, certification, and other national issues. Members receive professional publications, *AMT Events* and *Journal of CE Topics and Issues*, which provide timely information and educational articles of interest to medical assistants.

Certification Examination

In 1972, the American Medical Technologists (AMT) association initiated a nationally recognized certification process to address the needs of medical assistants and award the title of **Registered Medical Assistant, RMA (AMT)**, following the successful completion of a program accredited by a recognized accrediting body and after passing the national certification examination. The RMA (AMT) exam is designed to evaluate the competence of the entry-level medical assistant. The AMT also offers a certification for individuals specializing in front-office procedures, the Certified Medical Administrative Specialist, CMAS (AMT).

The format and questions on the exam are developed by the Examinations, Qualifications, and Standards Committee of the AMT. After applicants receive their Authorization to Test letter, they can schedule their examination at any PearsonVUE testing center. To view the content outline of this examination, go to the AMT website at www.americanmedtech.org, click the *Get Certified* tab, and then click the link for *Medical Assistants* or *Medical Administrative Specialists*. Successful examinees must recertify every three years by obtaining the required number of CEUs or by retaking the exam.

Additional criteria for certification through the AMT include graduating from a formal medical services training program of the United States Armed Forces or having been employed in the medical field for a minimum of five out of the last seven years. Those who desire to become certified through the AMT must complete and submit an online application with the application fee and any other pertinent documentation through a secure portal.

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