

JOB PROFILE

Consider A Career As A Certified Medical Assistant

(NAPSA)—The last time you visited a doctor's office, you may have encountered a Certified Medical Assistant (CMA). Perhaps it was the person who scheduled your appointment or who greeted you when you checked in. It could have been the person who escorted you to the exam room to ask routine health questions or to record your vital signs. A CMA may have helped you understand an item on your doctor's bill or called in a prescription to your pharmacist.

Those who enter the medical assisting profession enjoy contact with patients, experience a wide variety of responsibilities and thrive in the fast-paced environment of a medical practice or clinic. Certified Medical Assistants perform a wide array of clinical and administrative duties with physicians of all specialties, including family practitioners, pediatricians, podiatrists, chiropractors and optometrists, among others. Most CMAs work a regular 40-hour work week—some work part-time, evenings or weekends.

Responsibilities vary depending on office location, size and specialty. In small practices, CMAs usually perform both clinical and administrative functions, reporting to an office manager, physician or other health practitioner. In larger healthcare settings, CMAs may specialize in one specific area, such as billing (administrative only) or laboratory procedures (clinical only).

Certified Medical Assistants answer telephones, greet patients, update and file patient medical records, fill out insurance forms, schedule appointments, arrange for hospital admissions and laboratory services and handle correspondence, transcribing and book-

CMA QUICK FACTS

According to the American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA), by embarking on a career as a Certified Medical Assistant, you will be:

• **In Demand:** Medical assisting is one of the fastest growing professions in the U.S. Each year, more than 7,000 candidates earn the CMA credential.

• **Paid Competitively:** Medical assistants earn from \$17,118-\$34,112 per year depending on location and experience, based on a 2000 report by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. The median salary range for medical assistants is \$23,000 with some medical assistants earning up to \$16.14 per hour.

• **Energized:** CMAs enjoy a wide variety of job responsibilities in both clinical and administrative settings.

• **Helping Others:** CMAs work side by side with physicians and other skilled practitioners making a difference in the lives of the patients they serve.

• **Valued:** The CMA plays a vital role within a medical practice—and is appreciated by colleagues and patients.



keeping. They may take medical histories, explain treatment procedures to patients, prepare patients for examination and assist the physician throughout the exam. CMAs also collect and prepare laboratory specimens or perform basic laboratory tests. They instruct patients about medications and special diets, prepare and administer medications as directed by a physician, authorize drug refills as directed, draw blood, prepare patients for x-rays, take electrocardiograms, remove sutures and change dressings.

Most employers prefer to hire graduates of formal programs in medical assisting. Such programs are offered in postsecondary vocational schools, community and junior colleges, and in colleges and universities. Postsecondary programs usually last either one year, resulting in a certificate or diploma, or two years, resulting in an associate degree. Courses cover anatomy, physiology and medical technology, as well as computer applications, transcription, record keeping, accounting and insurance processing. Students learn laboratory techniques, clinical and diagnostic procedures, pharmaceutical principles, medication administration and first aid. In addition, medical assisting students study office practices, patient relations, medical law and ethics.

Earning the CMA credential is one way a medical assistant can demonstrate his or her knowledge and commitment to professionalism. Those who graduate from a program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) or the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES) are eligible to sit for the national CMA Certification Examination of the Certifying Board of the American Association of Medical Assistants. Like other professional designations, the CMA is evidence of competence in a demanding field. CMAs also benefit from job security due to a growing and aging population.

To learn more or to find an accredited medical assisting program in your area, contact the American Association of Medical Assistants at 1-800-228-2262 or visit the AAMA Web site at www.aama-ntl.org.