

Excerpt from Medical Assistant Curriculum Guide Outline

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Health Care Trends

The health care industry is currently undergoing increased demand for its services, due to technological advances in medicine as well as a growing and aging population. These trends create a higher demand for group practices, clinics, and other health care facilities that require competent practitioners and support staff. There is an inadequate supply of trained support personnel, such as medical assistants in the health care arena to accommodate this growing demand to provide quality health care in all practice settings.

Critical Need for Medical Assistants

In response to an increased demand for health care services that incorporate state-of-the-art technologies for delivering quality care, there exists a substantial need for additional trained support staff throughout a variety of health care settings. As a result of this rapid expansion of the health services industry, employment of medical assistants (MAs) is expected to grow at a more rapid rate than the average growth rate for all occupations. In view of the preference of many health care employers for trained personnel, medical assistants with formal training or experience, particularly those with certification, will be expected to have the best prospects for employment. According to the Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, (2005, p. 2) "Employment of medical assistants is expected to grow much faster than the average for all occupations through the year 2012 as the health services industry expands because of technological advances in medicine, and a growing and aging population. Increasing utilization of medical assistants in the rapidly growing healthcare industries will result in fast employment growth for the occupation. In fact, medical assistants are projected to be the fastest growing occupation over the 2002-12 period." According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of medical assistants during this period will increase by 36% or more.

MAs are the only allied health professionals specifically trained to work in ambulatory settings, and they are trained and qualified to perform both *administrative* and *clinical* procedures. Due to continual pressures to limit costs, physician practices value this unique versatility of the MA. The rare flexibility of the medical assistant who can serve in both administrative and clinical capacities makes the MA a highly sought professional. In addition, MAs primarily work in outpatient settings, which are expected to experience a faster than average rate of growth. In 2000, medical assistants held nearly 350,000 jobs. Sixty percent were in physician's offices, and 15 percent were in hospitals. The other 25 percent were either in nursing homes, other health care facilities, or in offices of other health practitioners. The field is expected to grow much faster than the average job growth in other fields, with an increase of at least 35% between 2000 and 2010.