

Introduction to Medical Assisting

CASE STUDY

EMPLOYEE INFORMATION	Employee Name	Gender	Date of Hire
	Sandro Peso	M	10/11/20XX
	Position	Credentials	Supervisor
	Student	In Training	Malik Katahri, CMM



likes best and where he might like to work when he finishes his training. It will not be long until he graduates and needs to take the test to become credentialed. He is nervous about the exam but really wants to do well to get the best job he can to help support his family.

Sandro Peso is a 33-year-old father of four who lost his job at a local factory. He is a medical assistant in-training, and is currently working at BWW Associates. He will be working in the administrative, clinical, and laboratory sections of the office. He wants to decide which area he

Keep Mr. Peso in mind as you study this chapter. There will be questions at the end of the chapter based on the case study. The information in the chapter will help you answer these questions.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing Chapter 1, you will be able to:

- 1.1 Recognize the duties and responsibilities of a medical assistant.
- 1.2 Distinguish various organizations related to the medical assisting profession.
- 1.3 Explain the need for and importance of the medical assistant credentials.
- 1.4 Identify the training needed to become a professional medical assistant.
- 1.5 Discuss professional development as it relates to medical assisting education.

KEY TERMS

- | | |
|---|--|
| accreditation | Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) |
| Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES) | continuing education |
| American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA) | cross-training |
| American Medical Technologists (AMT) | Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) |
| certification | Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) |
| Certified Medical Assistant (CMA) | professional development |
| Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments of 1988 (CLIA '88) | Registered Medical Assistant (RMA) |
| | registration |
| | résumé |

- IX. C (1)** Discuss legal scope of practice for medical assistants
- IX. C (5)** Discuss licensure and certification as it applies to healthcare providers
- IX. P (2)** Perform within scope of practice
- IX. P (4)** Practice within the standard of care for a medical assistant

1. General Orientation

- a. Comprehend the current employment outlook for the medical assistant
- c. Understand medical assistant credentialing requirements and the process to obtain the credential; comprehend the importance of credentialing
- d. Have knowledge of the general responsibilities of the medical assistant
- e. Define scope of practice for the medical assistant, and comprehend the conditions for practice within the state that the medical assistant is employed

11. Career Development

Graduates:

- b. Demonstrate professionalism by:
 - (9) Conducting work within scope of education, training, and ability

► Introduction

Healthcare is changing at a rapid rate. Advanced technology, implementation of cost-effective medicine, and the aging population are all factors that have caused growth in the healthcare services industry. As the healthcare services industry expands, the U.S. Department of Labor projects that medical assisting will be the fastest-growing occupation between 2008 and 2018. The growth in the number of physicians' group practices and other healthcare practices that use support personnel will in turn continue to drive up demand for medical assistants. Medical assisting is the perfect complement to this changing industry.

Medical assistants perform a variety of duties that make them well-qualified to enter a variety of job openings in the healthcare industry. This chapter provides an introduction to the medical assisting profession. It will present a general description of your future duties, credentials, and needed training. Some basic facts about professional associations, organizations, and professional development related to medical assisting are also discussed. All of this will help you to enter your career as a medical assistant.

► Responsibilities of the Medical Assistant

LO 1.1

Your specific responsibilities as a medical assistant will probably depend on the location and size of the facility, as well as its medical specialties. Medical assistants work in an administrative, clinical, and/or laboratory capacity. As an administrative

medical assistant, you may handle the payroll for the office staff (or supervise a payroll service), obtain equipment and supplies, and serve as the link between the physician and representatives of pharmaceutical and medical supply companies. As a clinical medical assistant, you will be the physician's right arm by maintaining an efficient office, preparing and maintaining medical records, assisting the physician during examinations, and keeping examination rooms in order. Your laboratory duties as a medical assistant may include performing basic laboratory tests and maintenance of laboratory equipment. In small practices, you may handle all duties. In larger practices, you may specialize in a particular duty. As a medical assistant grows in his or her profession, advanced duties may be required. The lists of duties in Table 1-1 are provided to help you better understand what you will be doing when you practice as a medical assistant.

You may also choose to specialize in a specific area of healthcare. For example, podiatric medical assistants make castings of feet, expose and develop X-rays, and assist podiatrists in surgery. Ophthalmic medical assistants help ophthalmologists (doctors who provide eye care) by administering diagnostic tests, measuring and recording vision, testing the functioning of eyes and eye muscles, and performing other duties. A discussion of medical specialties is found in the chapter *Healthcare and the Healthcare Team*. For specific information about medical assistant duties within medical specialty practice, review the following chapters: *Assisting in Reproductive and Urinary Specialties*, *Assisting in Pediatrics*, *Assisting in Geriatrics*, *Assisting in Other Medical Specialties*, and *Assisting with Eye and Ear Care*.

TABLE 1-1 Daily Duties of Medical Assistants

Duty Type	Entry-Level Duties	Advanced Duties
General 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizing and responding effectively to verbal, nonverbal, and written communications. • Explaining treatment procedures to patients. • Providing patient education within scope of practice. • Facilitating treatment for patients from diverse cultural backgrounds and for patients with hearing or vision impairments, or physical or mental disabilities. • Acting as a patient advocate. • Maintaining medical records. 	None
Administrative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greeting patients. • Handling correspondence. • Scheduling appointments. • Answering telephones. • Creating and maintaining patient medical records. • Handling billing, bookkeeping, and insurance processing. • Performing medical transcription. • Arranging for hospital admissions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and conducting public outreach programs to market the physician's professional services. • Negotiating leases of equipment and supply contracts. • Negotiating nonrisk and risk managed care contracts. • Managing business and professional insurance. • Developing and maintaining fee schedules. • Participating in practice analysis. • Coordinating plans for practice enhancement, expansion, consolidation, and closure. • Performing as a HIPAA compliance officer. • Providing personnel supervision and employment practices. • Providing information systems management.
Clinical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisting the doctor during examinations. • Assisting with asepsis and infection control. • Performing diagnostic tests, such as spirometry and ECGs. • Giving injections, where allowed. • Phlebotomy, including venipuncture and capillary puncture. • Disposing of soiled or stained supplies. • Performing first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). • Preparing patients for examinations. • Preparing and administering medications as directed by the physician, and following state laws for invasive procedures. • Recording vital signs and medical histories. • Removing sutures or changing dressings on wounds. • Sterilizing medical instruments. • Instructing patients about medication and special diets, authorizing drug refills as directed by the physician, and calling pharmacies to order prescriptions. • Assisting with minor surgery. • Teaching patients about special procedures before laboratory tests, surgery, X-rays, or ECGs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiating an IV and administering IV medications with appropriate training, and as permitted by state law. • Reporting diagnostic study results. • Assisting patients in the completion of advance directives and living wills. • Assisting with clinical trials.
Laboratory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performing Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA)—waived tests, such as a urine pregnancy test, on the premises. • Collecting, preparing, and transmitting laboratory specimens. • Teaching patients to collect specific specimens properly. • Arranging laboratory services. • Meeting safety standards (OSHA guidelines) and fire protection mandates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performing as an OSHA compliance officer. • Performing moderately complex laboratory testing with appropriate training and certification.

▶ Medical Assisting Organizations LO 1.2

A multitude of organizations guide the profession of medical assisting. These include professional associations such as the American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA) and the American Medical Technologists (AMT), as well as accrediting and other organizations. As a future medical assistant, knowledge of these organizations will help you make critical decisions about your career.

Professional associations set high standards for quality and performance in a profession. They define the tasks and functions of an occupation, and they provide members with the opportunity to communicate and network with one another. They also present their goals to the profession and to the general public. Becoming a member of a professional association helps you achieve career goals and furthers the profession of medical assisting. Joining as a student is encouraged and some associations even offer discounted rates to students for a specified amount of time after graduation.

American Association of Medical Assistants

The seed of the idea for a national association of medical assistants—later to be called the **American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA)**—was planted at the 1955 annual state convention of the Kansas Medical Assistants Society. The next year, at an American Medical Association (AMA) meeting, the AAMA was officially created. In 1978, the US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare declared medical assisting as an allied health profession.

AAMA's Purpose The AAMA works to raise standards of medical assisting to a more professional level. It is the only professional association devoted exclusively to the medical assisting profession. Its creator and first president, Maxine Williams, had extensive experience in orchestrating medical assisting projects for the Kansas Medical Assistants Society. She also served as co-chair of the planning committee that formed the AAMA.

AAMA Occupational Analysis In 1996, the AAMA formed a committee whose goal was to revise and update its standards for the **accreditation** of programs that teach medical assisting. The committee's findings were published in 1997 as the "AAMA Role Delineation Study: Occupational Analysis of the Medical Assistant Profession." The study included a new Role Delineation Chart that outlined the areas of competence to be mastered as an entry-level medical assistant. The Role Delineation Chart of the CMA (AAMA) was further updated in 2003 to include additional competencies. In 2009, it was updated again and was renamed the Occupational Analysis of the CMA (AAMA).

The Occupational Analysis provides the basis for medical assisting education and evaluation. Mastery of the areas of competence listed in the Occupational Analysis is required for all students in accredited medical assisting programs. The Occupational Analysis includes three areas of competence: administrative, clinical, and general. Each of these three areas is

divided into two or more narrower areas, for a total of 10 specific areas of competence. Within each area, a bulleted list of statements describes the medical assistant's role.

According to the AAMA, the Occupational Analysis may be used to

- Describe the field of medical assisting to other healthcare professionals.
- Identify entry-level areas of competence for medical assistants.
- Help practitioners assess their own current competence in the field.
- Aid in the development of continuing education programs.
- Prepare appropriate types of materials for home study.

Professional Support for CMAs (AAMA) When you become a member of the AAMA, you will have a large support group of active medical assistants. Membership benefits include

- Professional publications, such as *CMA Today*.
- A large variety of educational opportunities, such as chapter-sponsored seminars and workshops about the latest administrative, clinical, and management topics.
- Group insurance.
- Legal information.
- Local, state, and national activities that include professional networking and multiple continuing education opportunities.
- Legislative monitoring to protect your right to practice as a medical assistant.
- Access to the website at www.aama-ntl.org.

American Medical Technologists (AMT)

American Medical Technologists (AMT) is a nonprofit certification agency and professional membership association representing over 45,000 individuals in allied healthcare. Established in 1939, AMT began a program to register medical assistants at accredited schools in the early 1970s. The AMT provides allied health professionals with professional certification services and membership programs to enhance their professional and personal growth. Upon certification, individuals automatically become members of AMT and start to receive benefits. You will read more about the benefits of joining a professional organization later in the chapter. The AMT provides many certifications, including the Registered Medical Assistant RMA (AMT) credential and the Certified Medical Assistant Specialist CMAS (AMT) credential.

Professional Support for RMAs (AMT) The AMT offers many benefits for RMAs (AMT). These include

- Professional publications.
- Membership in the AMT Institute for Education.
- Group insurance programs—liability, health, and life.
- State chapter activities.

- Legal representation in health legislative matters.
- Annual meetings and educational seminars.
- Student membership.
- Access to the website at www.amt1.com.

Other Medical Assisting Organizations

In addition to the AAMA, which provides the CMA credential, and the AMT, which provides the RMA and CMAS credentials, many organizations provide certification testing and medical assisting credentials. Specific information about medical assisting credentials is discussed later in this chapter.

National Healthcareer Association (NHA) This organization was established in 1989 as an information resource and network for today's active healthcare professionals. NHA provides certification and **continuing education** services for healthcare professionals and curriculum development for educational institutions. They offer a variety of certification exams, including Billing and Coding Specialist (CBCS), Medical Administrative Assistant (CMAA), and Clinical Medical Assistant (CCMA). Some of the NHA's programs and services include

- Certification development and implementation.
- Continuing education curriculum development and implementation.
- Program development for unions, hospitals, and schools.
- Educational, career advancement, and networking services for members.
- Registry of certified professionals.

Healthcare educators working in their various fields of study develop the National Healthcare Association certification exams. The NHA is a member of The National Organization of Competency Assurance (NOCA).

National Center for Competency Testing (NCCT) This is an independent agency that certifies the validity of competency and knowledge of the medical profession through examination. Medical assistants and medical office assistants receive the designation of National Certified Medical Assistant (NCMA) and National Certified Medical Office Assistant (NCMOA) after passing the certification examination. The NCCT avoids any allegiance to a specific organization or association.

The National Association for Health Professionals (NAHP) NAHP (www.nahpusa.com) offers multiple credentials for healthcare professionals. The organization, which has been in existence for 30 years, prides itself in making the process of obtaining a credential an accessible, affordable, and obtainable goal for those individuals who wish to show commitment to their chosen profession. Having multiple credentials with one agency makes maintaining continuing education easier for practicing healthcare professionals. The NAHP offers many credentials, including the Medical Assistant, Phlebotomy Technician, EKG Technician, Coding Specialist,

Administrative Health Assistant, Patient Care Technician, Dental Assistant, Pharmacy Technician, and Surgical Technician credentials.

Medical Assistant Credentials LO 1.3

Certification is confirmation by an organization that an individual is qualified to perform a job to professional standards. **Registration** is the granting of a title or license by a board that gives permission to practice in a chosen profession. Once credentialed, you earn the right to wear a pin that is obtained through the credentialing organization (Figure 1-1).

Medical assisting credentials such as certification and registration are not always required to practice as a medical assistant. However, employers today are aggressively recruiting medical assistants who are credentialed in their field. Small physician practices are being consolidated or merged into larger providers of healthcare, such as hospitals, to decrease operating expenses. Human resource directors of these larger organizations place great importance on professional credentials for their employees.

An accredited medical assisting program is competency based; this means that standards are set by an accrediting body for administrative and clinical competencies. Accrediting bodies are discussed later in this chapter. It is the educational institution's duty to ensure that medical assisting students learn all medical assisting competencies and that evidence is clearly documented for each student. Periodic evaluations are performed by the accrediting agencies to ensure the effectiveness of the program.

Competencies and proficiency assessments are parts of the CMA (AAMA) examination. For example, administering medications is a competency required of accredited medical assisting programs and is a component of the CMA (AAMA) examination. The CMA (AAMA) credential and the affiliation with a professional organization demonstrate competence and provide evidence of training. They also lessen the likelihood of a legal challenge to the quality of a medical assistant's work.



FIGURE 1-1 Wearing one of these pins indicates you have obtained a credential in medical assisting. Medical assistants registered by the American Medical Technologists wear the pin on the left. Members of the American Association of Medical Assistants wear the pin on the right.

Basically, there is less chance of malpractice if employees are credentialed through either AAMA or RMA. School accreditation and credentials will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

State and Federal Regulations

Certain provisions of the **Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)** and the **Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments of 1988 (CLIA '88)** are making mandatory credentialing for medical assistants a logical step in the hiring process. These two (OSHA and CLIA '88) regulate healthcare but presently do not require that medical assistants be credentialed. However, various components of these statutes and their regulations can be met by demonstrating that medical assistants in a clinical setting are certified. For example, some physician offices perform moderately complex laboratory testing on-site. The medical assistant can perform moderately complex tests if she or he has the appropriate training and skills.

AAMA Credential

The **Certified Medical Assistant (CMA)** credential is awarded by the Certifying Board of the AAMA. The AAMA's certification examination evaluates mastery of medical assisting competencies based on the Occupational Analysis of the CMA (AAMA), which is available at www.aama-ntl.org/resources/library/OA.pdf. The National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) also provides technical assistance in developing the tests.

CMAs (AAMA) must recertify the CMA (AAMA) credential every 5 years. To be recertified as a CMA (AAMA), 60 contact hours must be accumulated during the 5-year period: 10 in the administrative area, 10 in the clinical area, and 10 in the general area, with 30 additional hours in any of the three categories. In addition, 30 of these contact hours must be from an approved AAMA program. The AAMA also requires you to hold a current CPR card.

The recertification mandate requires you to learn about new medical developments through education courses or participation in an examination. Hundreds of continuing education courses are sponsored by local, state, and national AAMA groups. The AAMA also offers self-study courses through its continuing education department.

As of June 1998, only completing students of medical assisting programs accredited by CAAHEP and ABHES are eligible to take the certification examination. The AAMA offers the Candidate's Guide to the Certification Examination to help applicants prepare for the examination. This guide explains the test format and test-taking strategies. It also includes a sample examination with answers and information about study references. Some schools have also incorporated test preparation reviews into their programs. They do this because the credentialing agencies require a certain percentage of students to pass the program in order for the schools to keep their accreditation.

As of January 2009, the CMA (AAMA) examination is computerized. These computerized tests may be taken any time at a designated testing site in your area. You may search the Internet for an application and test review materials. Once you have successfully passed the CMA (AAMA) examination, you have

earned the right to add that credential to your name, such as Miguel A. Perez, CMA (AAMA).

AMT Credentials

The American Medical Technologists (AMT) organization credentials medical assistants as **Registered Medical Assistants (RMA)** or Certified Medical Assistant Specialists (CMAS). Although this section focuses on the RMA credential, you can find more about the CMAS credential on the AMT website at www.amt1.org.

The AMT sets forth both educational and experiential requirements to earn the RMA (AMT) credential. These include

- Graduation from a medical assistant program that is accredited by ABHES or CAAHEP, or is accredited by a regional accrediting commission, by a national accrediting organization approved by the U.S. Department of Education, or by a formal medical services training program of the U.S. Armed Forces.
- Alternatively, employment in the medical assisting profession for a minimum of 5 years, no more than 2 years of which may have been as an instructor in the postsecondary medical assistant program.
- Passing the AMT examination for RMA (AMT) certification.

RMAs (AMT) must accumulate 30 contact hours for continuing education units (CEU) every 3 years if they were certified after 2006. RMAs (AMT) who were certified before this date are expected to keep abreast of all the changes and practices in their field through educational programs, workshops, or seminars. However, there are no specific continuing education requirements. Once a medical assistant has passed the AMT exam, she has earned the right to add RMA (AMT) to her name: Kaylyn R. Haddix, RMA (AMT).

The RMA (AMT) and CMA (AAMA) Examinations

The RMA (AMT) and CMA (AAMA) qualifying examinations are rigorous. Participation in an accredited program will help you learn what you need to know. The examinations cover several distinct areas of knowledge, including

- General medical knowledge, including terminology, anatomy, physiology, behavioral science, medical law, and ethics.
- Administrative knowledge, including medical records management, collections, insurance processing, and the **Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)**. HIPAA is a set of government regulations that help ensure continuity and privacy of healthcare, among other things.
- Clinical knowledge, including examination room techniques, medication preparation and administration, pharmacology, and specimen collection.

Each certification examination is based on a specific content outline created by the certifying organization. You should research the Internet to gain additional information regarding any of these certifications. See Procedure 1-1, Obtaining Certification/Registration Information through the Internet.

▶ Training Programs

LO 1.4

With the emergence of formal training programs for medical assistants and the continuous changes in healthcare today, the role of the medical assistant has become dynamic and wide ranging. These changes have raised the expectations for medical assistants. The knowledge base of the modern medical assistant includes

- Administrative and clinical skills.
- Patient insurance product knowledge (specific to the workers' geographic locations).
- Compliance with healthcare-regulating organizations.
- Exceptional customer service.
- Practice management.
- Current patient treatments and education.

The medical assisting profession requires a commitment to self-directed, lifelong learning. Healthcare is changing rapidly because of new technology, new healthcare delivery systems, and new approaches to facilitating cost-efficient, high-quality healthcare. A medical assistant who can adapt to change and is continually learning will be in high demand.

Formal programs in medical assisting are offered in a variety of educational settings, including vocational-technical high schools, postsecondary vocational schools, community and junior colleges, and 4-year colleges and universities. Vocational school programs usually last 9 months to 1 year and award a certificate or diploma. Community and junior college programs are usually 2-year associate's degree programs. Training can be obtained through traditional classroom as well as online settings.

Accreditation

Accreditation is the process by which programs are officially authorized. The U.S. Department of Education recognizes two national entities that accredit medical assisting educational programs:

- **Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP).** CAAHEP works directly with the Medical Assisting Educational Review Board (MAERB) of Medical Assistants Endowments to ensure that all accredited schools provide a competency-based education. CAAHEP accredits medical assisting programs in both public and private postsecondary institutions throughout the United States that prepare individuals for entry into the medical assisting profession.
- **Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES).** ABHES accredits private postsecondary institutions and programs that prepare individuals for entry into the medical assisting profession.

Accredited programs must cover the following topics:

- Anatomy and physiology
- Medical terminology
- Medical law and ethics
- Psychology

- Oral and written communications
- Laboratory procedures
- Clinical and administrative procedures

High school students may prepare for these courses by studying mathematics, health, biology, keyboarding, office skills, bookkeeping, and information technology. You may obtain current information about accreditation standards for medical assisting programs from the AAMA.

Medical assisting programs must also include a practicum (externship) or work experience. This applied training is for a specified length of time in an ambulatory care setting, such as a physician's office, hospital, or other healthcare facility. Additionally, the AAMA lists its minimum standards for accredited programs. This list of standards ensures that all personnel—administrators and faculty alike—are qualified to perform their jobs. These standards also ensure that financial and physical resources are available at accredited programs.

Graduation from an accredited program helps your career in three ways. First, it shows that you have completed a program that meets nationally accepted standards. Second, it provides recognition of your education by professional peers. Third, it makes you eligible for registration or certification. Students who graduate from an ABHES- or CAAHEP-accredited medical assisting program are eligible to take the CMA (AAMA) or RMA (AMT) immediately.

Work Experience

Your practicum (externship) or work experience is mandatory in accredited schools. The length of your experience will vary, depending on your particular program, so familiarize yourself with the program requirements as soon as possible. Since this is a mandatory part of the program, no matter how good your grades are in class, if the work experience is not completed, you will not graduate from the program.

Your practicum (externship) or work experience is an extension of your classroom learning experience. You will apply skills learned in the classroom in an actual medical office or other healthcare facility. You also earn the right to include this applied training experience on your résumé under job experience, as long as you title it as "Medical Assistant Practicum, Externship, or Work Experience." The *Preparing for the World of Work* chapter will further explain your practical work experience.

▶ Professional Development

LO 1.5

Professional development refers to skills and knowledge attained for both personal development and career advancement. During your training, you should strive to improve your knowledge and skills. This will help you transition into your first job with ease. You can also gain valuable knowledge and skills through volunteering prior to or in addition to work experience obtained as a student.

Once you have entered the world of work as a medical assistant, you will want to continue to develop in your profession. This can be done by gaining more knowledge and skills through

additional training, **cross-training**, and/or other forms of continuing education. During your training and practice as a medical assistant, you must know and work within your scope of practice and network to improve yourself professionally.

Volunteer Programs

Volunteering is a rewarding experience. Before you even begin a medical assisting program, you can gain experience in a healthcare profession through volunteer work. As a volunteer, you will get hands-on training and learn what it is like to assist patients who are ill, disabled, or frightened.

You may volunteer as an aide in a hospital, clinic, nursing home, or doctor's office, or as a typist or filing clerk in a medical office or medical record room. Some visiting nurse associations and hospices (home-like medical settings that provide medical care and emotional support to terminally ill patients and their families) also offer volunteer opportunities. These experiences may help you decide if you want to pursue a career as a medical assistant.

The American Red Cross also offers volunteer opportunities for student medical assistants. The Red Cross needs volunteers for its disaster relief programs locally, statewide, nationally, and abroad. As part of a disaster relief team at the site of a hurricane, tornado, storm, flood, earthquake, or fire, volunteers learn first-aid and emergency triage skills. Red Cross volunteers gain valuable work experience that may help them obtain a job.

Because volunteers are not paid, it is usually easy to find work opportunities. Just because you are not paid for volunteer work, however, does not mean the experience is not useful for meeting your career goals.

Include information about any volunteer work on your **résumé**—a computer-generated document that summarizes your employment and educational history. Be sure to note specific duties, responsibilities, and skills you developed during the volunteer experience. Refer to the *Preparing for the World of Work* chapter for examples of résumés.

Continued Training

Continuing education and training are essential to your career as a medical assistant. As discussed earlier, continuing education is mandatory for maintaining your certification or registration. In addition, you may want to become multiskilled. Many hospitals and healthcare practices are embracing the idea of a multiskilled healthcare professional (MSHP). An MSHP is a cross-trained team member who is able to handle many different duties.

Reducing Healthcare Costs As a result of healthcare reform and downsizing (a reduction in the number of staff members) to control the rising cost of healthcare, medical practices are eager to reduce personnel costs by hiring multiskilled health professionals. These individuals, who perform the functions of two or more people, are the most cost-efficient employees.

Expanding Your Career Opportunities Career opportunities are vast if you are self-motivated and willing to learn new skills. If you continue to learn about new administrative

techniques and procedures, you will be an important part of the healthcare team.

Following are some examples of positions for medical assistants with additional experience and certifications:

- Medical Office Manager
- Medical Assisting Instructor (with a specified amount of experience and education)
- ECG Technician
- Patient Care Technician
- Medical Biller and Coder

If you are multiskilled, you will have an advantage when job hunting. Employers are eager to hire multiskilled medical assistants and may even create positions for them.

You can gain multiskill training by showing initiative and a willingness to learn every aspect of the medical facility in which you are working. When you begin working in a medical facility, establish goals regarding your career path and discuss them with your immediate supervisor. Indicate to your supervisor that you would like cross-training in every aspect of the medical facility. Begin in the department in which you are currently working and branch out to other departments once you master the skills needed for your current position. This will demonstrate a commitment to your profession and a strong work ethic. Cross-training is a valuable marketing tool to include on your résumé.

Scope of Practice

Professional development includes knowing your scope of practice and working within it. Medical assistants are not “licensed” healthcare professionals and most often work under a licensed healthcare provider, such as a nurse practitioner or physician. Licensed healthcare professionals may delegate certain duties to a medical assistant, providing she or he has had the appropriate training through an accredited medical assisting program or through on-the-job training provided by the medical facility or physician. Questions often arise regarding the kinds of duties a medical assistant can perform. There is no universal answer to these questions. There is no single national definition of a medical assistant's scope of practice. So, the medical assistant must research the state in which he or she works to learn about the scope of practice. In general, a medical assistant may not perform procedures for which he or she was not educated or trained. The AAMA and AMT are good resources to assist you in your research. The AAMA Occupational Analysis is also a helpful reference source that identifies the procedures that medical assistants are educated to perform.

Networking

Networking is building alliances—socially and professionally. It starts long before your job search. By attending professional association meetings, conferences, or other functions, medical assistants generate opportunities for employment and personal and professional growth. Networking, through continuing education conferences throughout your career, keeps the doors open to employment advancement.

PROCEDURE 1 - 1 Obtaining Certification/Registration Information through the Internet

Procedure Goal: To obtain information from the Internet regarding professional credentialing.

OSHA Guidelines: This procedure does not involve exposure to blood, body fluids, or tissue.

Materials: Computer with Internet access and printer.

Method: Procedure steps.

1. Open your Internet browser and locate a search engine. Search for the credential you would like to pursue; for example, Certified Medical Assistant or Registered Medical Assistant. If you are unsure of the credential you would like to pursue, you may just want to search for "Medical Assisting Credentials."
2. Select the site for the credential you are pursuing. Avoid sponsored links. These links are paid for and typically will not bring you to the site of a credentialing organization.
3. To navigate to the home page:
 - For the CMA (AAMA) credential, enter the site www.aama-ntl.org.



- For the RMA (AMT) or CMAS (AMT) credential, enter the site www.amt1.com.



4. Determine the steps you must take to obtain the selected credential.
 - For CMA (AAMA), go to the drop-down menu "CMA (AAMA) Exam" and select the link "How to Become a CMA (AAMA)" (or "About the Exam" in 2013).
 - For RMA (AMT), look for "Certification," and then "Medical Assistant" for RMA (AMT). Navigate to "Qualifications."

5. Print or write down the qualifications you must obtain.

RATIONALE: Maintaining a record of needed qualifications will be a reference as you pursue your chosen credential.
6. Once you have met the qualifications, you will need to apply for the examination or certification. Download the application and the application instructions for the RMA (AMT) or the CMAS (AMT) or the candidate application and handbook for the CMA (AAMA).
7. To view or print these instructions, you may need to download Adobe Reader. You can click on a link to download Adobe Reader after you click on the "Apply for Certification" link for AMT or the "Apply for the CMA (AAMA) Exam" (or "Apply for the Exam" in 2013) for AAMA.
8. Before or after you apply for the examination, you will need to prepare for the examination. Select the link "Prepare for the CMA (AAMA) Exam" (or "Study for the Exam" in 2013) on the AAMA site or the "Prepare for Exam" link under the "Medical Assistant" or "Medical Assistant Specialist" drop-down menus on the AMT site.
9. Prepare for the exam by reviewing the content outline, obtaining additional study resources, or taking a practice exam online.
10. Print or save downloaded information in a file folder on your desktop labeled "Credentials" or something that you can recognize. To print, click the printer icon found at the bottom of the Web page or click the printer icon in your browser.
11. Return to the appropriate site if you have additional questions. For the CMA (AAMA) site, you may want to check the "FAQs on CMA (AAMA) Certification" link. On the AMT site for RMA or CMAS, find links for Taking the Exam or FAQs (frequently asked questions).
12. Any questions you have that are not addressed on the sites can be e-mailed to the organizations. For RMA, send an e-mail to the link rma@amt1.com. On the AAMA site for the CMA credential, click the "Contact" link on the top right-hand side of the screen.

SUMMARY OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

LEARNING OUTCOMES	KEY POINTS
1.1 Recognize the duties and responsibilities of a medical assistant.	The duties and responsibilities of a medical assistant include administrative, clinical, and laboratory. Duties range from entry-level to advanced and are listed in Table 1-1.
1.2 Distinguish various organizations related to the medical assisting profession.	Many organizations provide certification and support to the medical assisting profession. The AAMA and AMT are highly recognized professional associations that can help you progress in your medical assisting career.

LEARNING OUTCOMES	KEY POINTS
1.3 Explain the need for and importance of the medical assistant credentials.	Certification and registration provide recognition of your education by peers and for advancement in your career. Medical assistants with a credential can expect more and better employment opportunities.
1.4 Identify the training needed to become a professional medical assistant.	Professional training for medical assistants includes formal training in a variety of educational settings. Training at a program accredited by CAAHEP or ABHES requires you to obtain work experience while you are still in school.
1.5 Discuss professional development as it relates to medical assisting education.	Professional development refers to skills and knowledge attained for both personal development and career advancement. Continuing education, cross-training, and pursuing additional training help you develop within your profession. Medical assistants who network, work within their scope of practice, and are more multiskilled are much more marketable.

C A S E S T U D Y C R I T I C A L T H I N K I N G



Recall Sandro Peso from the beginning of the chapter. Now that you have completed the chapter, answer the following questions regarding his situation.

1. Describe for Sandro the skills he may perform in each of the three areas (administrative, clinical, and laboratory) of medical assisting at BWW Associates office.

2. Why should Sandro obtain a credential and membership to a professional organization?

3. How can Sandro find out what to expect on his certification test?

4. What suggestions would you give Sandro to assist him in obtaining the best job?

E X A M P R E P A R A T I O N Q U E S T I O N S

- (LO 1.3) Two accrediting bodies for medical assisting training programs are
 - ABHES and OSHA
 - OSHA and AAMA
 - ABHES and CAAHEP
 - CAAHEP and CLIA
 - CAAHEP and NHA
- (LO 1.1) Entry-level administrative duties for a medical assistant include
 - Patient education, drawing blood, and negotiating leases
 - Taking vital signs and calling in prescriptions
 - Creating and maintaining patient medical records, and billing and coding
 - Performing ECGs, infection control, and billing and coding
 - Checking vital signs and creating and maintaining patient medical records

- (LO 1.2) The main purpose of the American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA) is to
 - Raise the standards of professionalism
 - Assist with malpractice lawsuits
 - Provide externships
 - Support continuing education for CMAs (AAMA) and RMAs (AMT)
 - Provide accreditation for medical assisting programs
- (LO 1.2) You want to obtain an RMA credential. Which organization do you need to contact?
 - NHA
 - AAMA
 - CAAHEP
 - ABHES
 - AMT

5. (LO 1.5) Which of the following is the best description of networking?
 - a. Building alliances that generate opportunities
 - b. Practical work experience during training
 - c. Official authorization of medical assisting educational programs
 - d. Training in every aspect of the medical facility
 - e. Using the Internet
6. (LO 1.5) Which of the following is most likely the best reason for you to become multiskilled?
 - a. Reduction of healthcare costs
 - b. Learning of new skills
 - c. Increased employment opportunities
 - d. Ability to work two jobs
 - e. Reduced wages
7. (LO 1.2) You have become a member of the AAMA. Which of the following is most likely one of your benefits?
 - a. Medical transcription
 - b. Accreditation
 - c. Cross-training
 - d. Increased wages
 - e. Group insurance
8. (LO 1.1) Which of the following would you be expected to do as an entry-level clinical medical assistant?
 - a. Develop public outreach programs
 - b. Be a HIPAA compliance officer
 - c. Arrange laboratory services
 - d. Arrange outpatient diagnostic tests
 - e. Sterilize medical instruments
9. (LO 1.3) Which of the following is *least* likely the reason for the increased need to obtain a medical assisting credential?
 - a. OSHA regulations
 - b. An increase in malpractice
 - c. An increase in organizations that require certification
 - d. CLIA regulations
 - e. An increase in multiskilled employees
10. (LO 1.2) Which of the following does *not* provide a certification examination for the medical assisting profession?
 - a. NAHP
 - b. AMT
 - c. AMA
 - d. NCCT
 - e. NHA