



Notes of appreciation

—From physicians and patients

By Cathy Cassata

The link between physicians and patients, medical assistants take pride in their role as critical members of the health care delivery team. But, their efforts aren't always recognized. So, in celebration of Medical Assistants Recognition Week, we contacted physicians and patients nationwide to give them the opportunity to express their gratitude for a job well done.

Physician praise

Patients know that when they come into my office, the medical assistant is always on their side. Because physicians are often very busy, patients need a good advocate. That's the medical assistant's greatest skill. If I get distracted, my medical assistants get me to refocus on our patients. We're at a point in time where medical assistants are an absolute essential to the good practice of medicine. They bring special skills to the

field that allow them to get patients into the office, identify patients' problems, and help care for patients' needs.

Bruce Burtenshaw, MD
Internist in Layton, Utah

Besides my nurse practitioner, I only hire Certified Medical Assistants (AAMA), because I know they've had adequate training in both clinical and administrative areas. If someone gets sick in either area, another medical

assistant can easily step up to the plate. If a patient calls in and has a clinical question, the medical assistant who answers the phone doesn't have to transfer the patient, put the patient on hold, or call the patient back, because she can answer it herself in most cases. The medical assistant can truly understand the patient's visit from beginning to end. Patients really appreciate this efficient way of running my practice.

Catharine Tabb, MD
Family practice physician in Louisville, Ohio

I've had the pleasure of working with my medical assistant for 15 years. She fits well into my team of LPNs and RNs, and brings her own unique skills to the practice. She coordinates the ordering of supplies, prepares patients to see me, assists with various procedures, and even administers immunization shots. She is on the Laser Safety Committee and Medical Assistants Committee,

where she oversees the duties and practice guidelines for the 40 medical assistants employed by our clinic. I thank her every chance I get for her good work keeping the clinic running efficiently and for taking exceptional care of our patients.

Glen Yoshida, MD, FACS

Otorhinolaryngologist in Grand Forks, N.D.

I can't imagine not having medical assistants on staff. We conduct nearly 45,000 patient visits a year for infants, elderly, and everyone in between. Our 15 medical assistants help make that possible. They conduct non-stress tests and EKGs, assist with minor surgeries, and administer immunization shots to name a few, but their greatest asset is getting to know patients and gaining a sense of what's really happening with patients' overall health. Often medical assistants know if a patient is a victim of domestic violence before I do, because patients won't tell me, but are comfortable confiding in a medical assistant. I've had medical assistants tell me that a patient is upset and I had no idea. Thanks to the medical assistant, I'm able to address these types of issues and move on with treatment.

Eric Brown, MD

Family practice physician in Bangor, Maine

Patient gratitude

My 27-year-old daughter has Down syndrome and problems with her ears, so we visit her doctor every three months for check-ups. The medical assistant at the office has a special human touch. She really makes an effort to get to know my daughter and talks to her about movies and her participation in the Special Olympics. Thankfully, doctor visits are something my daughter looks forward to because of the medical assistant. Plus, anytime I call the office, I ask for the medical

assistant since I know she can take care of our needs. She has a good relationship with the doctor, which makes me comfortable knowing I'm dealing with a team that works well together.

Virginia Esslinger

Grand Forks, N.D.

As a chronic pain patient, I visit my doctor often. During a visit, he asked if I'd volunteer on the clinic's Patient Advisory Council, which is a group of patients and medical staff who work together to figure out patients' needs. I have been impressed with the medical assistant on the council. She truly acts as the patients' advocate. She sees our perspective because she makes that a priority during her workday. She has on-target insight for developing relationships between medical staff and patients. She understands how the office works, how information gets back to the physician, and what the patients really like and dislike.

David Olson

Garland, Maine

I had a 90-minute test done that included blowing into a balloon several times throughout the test. There were five other patients doing the test at the same time and a medical assistant was running it. I couldn't believe how well she multitasked. Other staff members kept coming in and asking her questions about scheduling, billing, and other patients in the office and not in the office. She was amazing at wearing so many hats!

Kim Trow

Buffalo, N.Y.

As a person who used to work in the medical field, I really recognize what a stressful atmosphere it can be, so when I encountered the medical assistant at my doctor's office being so attentive and caring with me, I was impressed. Every

time I see her, she makes me feel like I'm the only patient on her mind. She makes sure to listen to all my concerns and if she doesn't have an answer, she gets one for me before the end of my visit. Her competence and compassion have kept me a patient for 10 years.

Debra Power

Bangor, Maine

My son was diagnosed with Global Developmental Delay at 18 months, and we became familiar with doctor visits. Soon after his diagnosis, he started having ear infection after ear infection, so we were referred to a specialist. The first time I called the office, I spoke with the medical assistant. She was so accommodating. She could tell from my son's medical records that he was a child who visits doctors frequently, so she made it clear that she would work around our schedule. That's the way it's been since. In one instance, my son had a surgery and was given the okay at the post-surgery visit, but a few days later he started showing early signs of a respiratory cough, so I called the medical assistant and she rearranged the schedule so my son got in the next day. I've referred three other individuals to the office because I know the medical assistant will take good care of them.

Sadie Ripley

Grand Forks, N.D.

Kudos continue

Pass along kudos this Medical Assistants Recognition Week. Find a medical assistant to pat on the back, whether that person is your coworker, staff member, or even yourself. Acknowledgment goes a long way!