

# Way to go!

## Patients, hiring managers, and providers sing your praises

By Cathy Cassata

*In honor of Medical Assistants Recognition Week (MARWeek), patients and providers offer these personal stories about the CMAs (AAMA) in their lives.*



### Patient gratitude

My 91-year-old mother has been going to the same primary care doctor for 10 years. Over the years, the CMA (AAMA) at the office has become an important part of my mom's care. Not only is she incredibly compassionate, friendly, and thorough, but she also has a knack for getting my mom to open up. Whenever the doctor asks my mom how she's doing, she always says, "Fine." But when the CMA (AAMA) talks with her, my mom often reveals how she's really feeling. The CMA (AAMA) has a special way of making my mom feel comfortable expressing herself.

About five years ago, my mom had a tiny pain in her side when she bent down to put her shoes on. She mentioned the pain to the medical assistant, but when the doctor came into the examination room, my mom didn't bring it up. The CMA (AAMA) prompted her to tell the doctor, who ordered an ultrasound. The ultrasound revealed that my mother had kidney cancer. While the pain my mom had in her side wasn't related to the cancer, telling her doctor about the

pain led to the discovery of the cancer and effective treatment for it. My mom says together the CMA (AAMA) and doctor saved her life!

**Lydia Padgett**  
Marion County, Florida

Getting your feet looked at, x-rayed, and fitted for orthotics can be embarrassing, but the medical assistant always makes me feel comfortable and at ease. Plus, on a few occasions, I had to have my orthotics adjusted, and the medical assistant made sure to schedule me to come back and see the doctor right away. This was really important so that I didn't have to walk around in discomfort or hold off on exercising for too long.

**Gina Meyer**  
Arlington Heights, Illinois

I was sitting with my twin sister while she received chemotherapy treatment for breast cancer when I answered a call from my radiologist. My sister encouraged me

to get a mammogram after her diagnosis, and the radiologist was calling to tell me I had breast cancer too. He told me I could see the breast specialist in a week, but I was so anxious to understand my condition more clearly that I wanted to see the doctor sooner. My sister suggested I walk downstairs to the doctor's office and ask for the CMA (AAMA), so I did.

As I was in the waiting room, the medical assistant recognized me and immediately approached me. She told me to go back and be with my sister, and that she would text me when the doctor could see me that day. They fitted me in a few hours later. During the visit, the CMA (AAMA) was incredibly compassionate and prepared me for what to expect. She took some of the stress out of a very stressful and scary situation. She also made sure all my questions were answered by the doctor. I couldn't have asked for a better person to be with me during my first oncology visit.

**Karen Schmidt**  
La Marque, Texas

A large teal heart shape is the central focus, containing the text for Medical Assistant Recognition Week. The background is a collage of medical-related icons: a stethoscope, a bone, a pill bottle, a heart, a syringe, a microscope, a person's head profile, and a document. The text is arranged in a circular path around the heart.

## Medical Assistants Recognition Week

From scheduling appointments and taking vitals to unraveling insurance mysteries and acting as patient liaisons, medical assistants—particularly CMAs (AAMA)—play a critical role on the health care delivery team. They put patients at ease while also ensuring providers' days run smoothly.

### Provider perspective

In this ever-changing industry, we're fortunate that our CMAs (AAMA) have flexibility, stamina, and the ability to prioritize the needs of others. Being a medical assistant is not an easy job, but those that choose the field do so because they are compassionate and caring and want to develop relationships with patients. Our CMAs (AAMA) are the backbone of the operation. They often have more insight into the patient's situation than other members of the health care team and provide everyone with the necessary information to ensure we provide the best care possible. As a manager and administrator, I try to make it a daily habit to make sure our medical assistants are valued and appreciated. However, my appreciation pales in comparison to the appreciation of the providers they support and the patients they care for.

**Lisa L. Bell**  
Hiring manager in Cincinnati

I thank our CMAs (AAMA) for the joy they bring to our team. They are always willing to go the extra mile to help staff and patients. Their clinical and administrative skills allow them to provide unwavering support to our providers and give them an understanding of what insurance companies are looking for as far as performance, prior authorizations, and more. Best of all, our CMAs (AAMA) act as an advocate for our patients. No doubt, our patients know the medical assistant is on their side.

**Kristy T. McDowell**  
Practice manager in Marianna, Florida

The quality of work and empathy for patients my CMA (AAMA) displays is invaluable. We work in a hospital-based

practice, specializing in breast care and surgery. On a daily basis, we treat women newly diagnosed with cancer in conjunction with interacting with patients' loved ones. I appreciate my medical assistant's ability to perceive and respond to the needs and concerns of not only patients but also the whole team, without being asked. Words cannot express my gratitude for all she does. She puts our patients at ease when they are in a very scary situation. Equally important, she loves what she does, and it shows. She exudes the desire to serve others and does so by developing excellence in all aspects of her job.

**Kimberley Clark-Paul, MD**  
Breast surgeon in Port Huron, Michigan

Our CMAs (AAMA) have a great range of skills—the greatest being the ability to anticipate the needs of the patient. They ensure all necessary ... [prep work] is completed before the physician enters the room. Our CMAs (AAMA) also function at a fast yet thorough pace, decreasing wait times and increasing patient satisfaction. They are flexible and easily adapt to working in different areas and specialties within our facility. *I thank our CMAs (AAMA) for working together as a team and supporting our health care team so we can all provide optimal care to our patients.*

**Leigh Ann Kiamar**  
Nurse manager in League City, Texas

I have hired CMAs (AAMA) since I started practicing medicine in 1992. They consistently impress me with their ability to manage phone calls,

prescription orders, and insurance issues, and then effortlessly transition to executing clinical duties. Their ability to connect with patients is invaluable. The truth is some of my CMAs (AAMA) understand the needs and concerns of patients better than many other health care professionals. *Thank you, CMAs (AAMA), for the long hours you put in, attention to detail, interaction with the health care team, and most of all, always being our patients' advocates.*

**Kenneth Hanger Jr., MD**  
Cardiologist in Charleston, South Carolina

CMAs (AAMA) define the word *versatile*. They are highly adaptable and able to work with many different types of patients, providers, and specialties. Medical assistants are the glue to the patient visit. The patient may not remember their provider, but oftentimes they know the name of their medical assistant. In fact, I often see direct reference to medical assistants when I review patient comments. As baby boomers continue to age, primary care will continue to evolve, and the role of the CMA (AAMA) will become even more central to preventive care. *Thank you to all hardworking CMAs (AAMA) for your continued service to a changing patient population.*

**Ann O'Connell**  
Vice president of ambulatory operations in Galveston, Texas