

Put at Ease



CMA (AAMA) Provides Comforting Care for Patients with Chronic Pain



By Cathy Cassata

Amybeth Box, CMA (AAMA), spends her days helping patients manage chronic pain in the San Diego area. “It’s not for the weary. There are days that are tough, when patients are really struggling, but I take pride in showing them compassion and making them feel better,” she says.

Many of the patients she sees underwent cervical or spinal fusions, experience failed back surgery syndrome, or have chronic joint pain. Oftentimes, before they end up at Box’s clinic, they have visited several physicians who have unsuccessfully treated their pain. “They’re at a loss,” she says. “Because of the opioid epidemic, a lot of physicians don’t want to prescribe opioids, and many patients don’t want to take them. But in addition to medication management, we offer regenerative therapies such as red light therapy and sound wave therapy.”

Her days consist of rooming patients, taking vitals, and assisting with procedures like intrathecal pain pump refills, epidural injections, joint injection platelet-rich plasma

procedures, vampire facials (the combination of platelet-rich plasma and microneedling procedures), and hair restorations. She also provides educational materials regarding at-home care like stretching exercises. “When a patient leaves the office, they forget a lot of details, so educating them and welcoming communication is really important,” explains Box.

She enjoys being a trusted source for patients. “If I have to be their sounding board for the five or 10 minutes that I’m with them, then that’s what I do,” she says. “I have learned that many times, they are not angry with us, but they’re angry with the pain.”

She personally relates to their situations, because she recently had a double cervical disc replacement, which causes discomfort. “I’m in their shoes, which gives me more empathy for what they’re going through,” says Box.

Her favorite part of the job is when an implantable therapy or injection brings a patient relief. “Witnessing their pain under control, them gain the ability to walk comfortably again, or a positive change in their whole demeanor and quality of life makes the hard days so worth it,” she says.

The most challenging part of her job is working with palliative care patients. “There are days I know I’m losing one of them, and the best way through it is to give them the care they deserve while they’re here,”

says Box.

She cherishes the times when patients give her hugs and tell her how she eased their fears.

“I’ve been working as a medical assistant for 26 years in a variety of specialties under great physicians who taught me different aspects of medicine. I tap into everything I’ve learned at this job,” says Box.

Before she started working in pain management in 2021, she spent six years in South Carolina working at the Naval Hospital Beaufort. There, she processed Navy Medicine recruits for the United States Marine Corps by reviewing their medical records; conducting laboratory tests, blood draws, and hearing and vision tests; and administering immunizations. “We’d process about 9,000 recruits a year,” says Box.

She flourished there. In 2012, she earned the title of lead medical assistant for recruit medical readiness; in 2016, she received the Civilian of the Quarter award; and in 2017, she was nominated for Civilian of the Year. “I learned a lot about Navy Medicine, made lifelong friends, and met my husband who is a Hospital Corpsman.”

Her early years as a medical assistant included working in pediatrics, urology, OB-GYN, and primary care. “I like knowing a little bit about everything in the body because you understand the patient better,” says Box. “This really helps me when caring for people in pain.” ♦