

YOU ARE WHAT YOU TEACH

CMA (AAMA) with Clinical Background Thrives in Education



By Cathy Cassata

Anna Sanchez-Buckley, CMA (AAMA), fell in love with teaching while working as a medical assistant at a patient-centered medical home clinic, where she worked one-on-one with patients. “I ran nutrition classes for patients who had obesity, hypertension, and diabetes to create goals and regimens to help them maintain their blood pressure and blood sugar and to establish dietary and exercise goals and plans,” she says.

She also presented to school-age children and teenagers about healthy eating and nutrition. “Education has always been my jam. I love to share information with people,” says Sanchez-Buckley.

Although education and patient instruction were her passions, formal teaching was not initially part of her career plan. After graduating from Ivy Tech Community College’s medical assisting program in 2016, the program chair at her alma mater offered her an adjunct educator position. Despite experiencing imposter syndrome, she took the role

and taught at night while working full-time.

After five years, she became the program chair. “I like being more than the instructor and finding ways to improve and streamline learning—to make it more accessible with newer technology,” says Sanchez-Buckley. “There are so many areas of growth that I want to see for this program that would benefit my students and their success in getting into the field.”

She revels in bonding with students through fun and humor, especially during lengthy classes. “My [medical laboratory technology] class is five hours, twice a week. I can read from a textbook or PowerPoint, but it doesn’t bring life to it. It doesn’t bring experience to it, so sometimes I incorporate theatrics or humor to keep students engaged,” she says.

One of her favorite assignments is having the students engage in a mock day-in-the-practice exercise. “Students are assessed on completing at least one administrative and one clinical scenario, such as filling out registration forms and health history questionnaires, rooming the patient, giving an injection, and educating the patient on [the] use of a nebulizer,” she says.

Because she has a background in patient education, she stresses its importance to her students. “Patient education is such a key role for medical assistants, yet many practices have stepped back on educating

the patient. I stress the importance of using layman’s terms, so patients understand what they need to do when they go home,” says Sanchez-Buckley.

She also has a passion for connecting with community partners to secure externships. “I frequently drop in to see how they’re doing and if they’re in need of medical assistants I can send their way,” says Sanchez-Buckley. “We have such a great rapport that many will send me supplies that we can use in class to support student learning and hands-on skill development.” She also works to expand access through dual-credit initiatives and continuously update curriculum to meet Medical Assistant Education Review Board and industry standards.

To continue learning and enhancing her leadership development, she is working toward a bachelor’s degree in health care administration. “I think this will make me an even stronger teacher and program chair,” she says.

For others aspiring to teach medical assisting, Sanchez-Buckley says to tune out the imposter syndrome: “It can be intimidating to some people, but many schools require a certain amount of experience in the ambulatory care setting as a medical assistant and an associate’s degree. If you meet those requirements and have a passion for this field and [a] knack for teaching others how to succeed in it, you’ve got what it takes.” ♦