

JANUARY 2007 JOURNAL ADMINISTRATIVE ARTICLE

Many Podiatric Assistants are reading this article because they are using it to fulfill a portion of their yearly CME credits. Whether you are a PMAC or not, the basic premise of this excerpt fits all of us who have committed to a position in a medical office. For those who are not PMAC's I hope this will give you the inspiration to study, learn, advance your knowledge and become certified.

Excerpt from:

Saunders Textbook of Medical Office Management

THE HEALTH CARE PROFESSION

If we look in the dictionary under the word *profession*, we find:

“an act of declaring a belief, faith, or opinion”

“a calling requiring special knowledge and often long and intensive academic preparation”

“a principal calling, vocation, or employment”

If we look in the dictionary under the word *professional*, we find:

“relating to or characteristic of a profession”

“characterized by conforming to the technical or ethical standards of a profession”

Now, if we page through our thesaurus to the word *professional*, we find such synonyms as *highly skilled*, *competent*, *knowledgeable*, *specialist*, *expert*, *experienced*, and *well-trained*.

These honorable words describe the health care profession and its members. Individuals are often encouraged to become more “professional” and to take a “professional” approach to their work. Professional standing cannot exist without training; practice administration; and recognition by qualified, approved agencies and governing bodies.

Professionalism can be thought of as a distinctive way of providing a service that has its own science of reasoning and practice. Many people confuse the term *occupation* with the term *profession*, but there is a difference. Professionals must have formal training, certification, or licensure and must demonstrate a high level of skill in the services they offer. Individuals who are holding an occupation are simply providing either a product or a service in today's skill-driven market. Those involved in a profession differ from those committed to an occupation because of the use of judgment in their work and additional years of education and training.

Some experts believe that to be a professional, a person must possess the following traits:

- Commitment
- Education
- Service orientation
- Autonomy of judgment

The health care profession is committed to dealing with the problems of human functioning. Health care professionals deal with life-and-death matters and also aid individuals by helping them solve problems through counseling. They strive to maintain the dignity of all patients while advising them and their families in medical decision making. A bond forms between the health care professional and the patient. This bond is based on trust. Health care professionals have a duty to provide each and every patient with the information needed for decision making, and they must strive to protect the bond between themselves and their patients.

Anyone who takes a leap into the unknown for a career in health care may feel like Alice in Wonderland, falling headfirst into the profession and uncertain as to where the path is leading. Health care is different

from other professions: While others may be going to a party on a late Friday afternoon, many health care professionals are arriving at a hospital or office to perform clinical or administrative duties. In most cases, it is not a 9-to-5 job. Most professions do not require the person to develop a given “set” of attitudes, but health care professionals must adopt behaviors, attitudes, and ethical guidelines to be able to do a good job. When someone prepares for a profession rooted in health care, they should be prepared for a possible lifelong commitment that includes expectations, privileges, and responsibilities. There are three types of learning experiences for health care professionals:

- Basic concepts/theories
- Skills
- Attitudes

Each of these has its place in preparing a health care professional for interaction with patients

BASIC CONCEPTS/THEORIES

Individuals preparing for a life course in health care must possess knowledge in four basic areas:

1. Behavioral science – sociology, psychology, and anthropology – to prepare one for understanding people’s needs and behaviors and how they affect interaction.
2. Mathematics – basic mathematics, statistics, computer skills, and critical thinking – to provide a base in problem-solving techniques, critical thinking, and research.
3. Liberal arts – philosophy, politics, and religion – to have exposure to many ideas and to help formulate one’s own.
4. Theoretic knowledge to build on the techniques of the profession and to lay the foundation for applying specific professional skills.

SKILLS

The skills necessary for health care professionals are as follows:

1. Technical skills: the ability to use safe and appropriate techniques to aid in diagnosing or conducting an evaluation of a patient.
2. Teaching/administrative skills: the ability to instruct patients, family members, and other health care professionals; to organize and implement solutions; to communicate effectively.
3. Research skills: the ability to collect and analyze data.
4. Interpersonal relationship/communication skills: the ability to effectively interact with others, such as patients and families, other health care professionals, support personnel, and business contacts.

ATTITUDES

The development of attitudes is highly important for health care professionals. Consider such areas as helping others, quality of life, and the role of your own convictions that help to form attitudes and effective ways to function. Do you like to help people? What feelings do you have regarding the physically handicapped patient? How do you feel about end-of-life decisions? All of these attitudes influence the professional’s interactions with patients.

The term *medical care* encompasses the care an individual receives from physicians, technicians, dentists, nurses, medical office managers, and other health care professionals. People who lived many centuries ago were not blessed with having physicians and medicine. As a result, many died of diseases and conditions that are virtually nonexistent today. Progress and technology have no limits in the medical field as we know it now, and dramatic achievements are being made almost daily.

JANUARY 2007 JOURNAL ADMINISTRATIVE ANSWER SHEET

The following questions will apply for CME credit for the 2008-2009 recertification year. All completed answer sheets should be held until you receive your recertification notice in the mail (April of 2008). At that time, attach all JOURNAL answer sheets to your notice and mail to:

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Read the excerpt from the Saunders Textbook of Medical Office Management and answer these questions.

1. A certified podiatric medical assistant is a professional and words such as _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, and _____ explain how we feel about our certification.
2. Professionalism can be thought of as a _____ way of providing a service .
3. The terms *occupation* and *professional* can be defined as –
Occupation _____

Professionals _____

4. Some experts believe that to be a *professional* a person must possess the following traits:

5. When you look up the word “autonomy” in the dictionary, the definition includes the word _____ several times.
6. In the medical field where we work, we must strive to maintain the _____ while advising them and their families.
7. Health care professionals must adopt _____, _____, and _____ to be able to do a good job.

8. The excerpt lists four areas to strive to accomplish in “basic concepts.” They are –

9. The excerpt also lists four areas to strive to accomplish in “skills.” They are --

27 -- 23 correct answers	5 credits
22 -- 18 correct answers	4 credits
17 - 13 correct answers	3 credits
12 -- 8 correct answers	2 credits
7 -- 1 correct answers	1 credit

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