




AAPM Staff Development Day

Medical Assistants – Training tailored to the general practice environment

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Outline

- What is a “Medical Assistant”
- Course development process
- Graduate case studies
- Lessons learned
- Lessons implemented
- Future workforce

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GPpartners

- GPpartners
 - Largest Division in Australia
 - 600,000 population in Brisbane’s northside
 - 200+ practices
 - 800+ GPs
 - Part of nationwide network of 110 Divisions
 - Largely government funded
 - Member support organisation for local general practices

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What is a Medical Assistant?

- Common role overseas, e.g. US, Europe, UK
 - 50 year track record
 - Classified as allied health worker
 - Emerging in other countries, e.g. NZ
- Different to “Physician Assistant”



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What is a Medical Assistant?

- Trained specifically for ambulatory care settings
 - to assist with both clinical and administrative tasks
 - delegated by supervising clinician/manager
 - multi-skilled, flexible staff members



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What is a Medical Assistant?



- A complementary role
 - Not a substitute for doctors or nurses
 - Not an independent role
 - Aids in alleviation of workforce pressures
 - Allows better use of doctor's and nurse's time and skills
 - Improved access to services for patients

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Why Medical Assisting?

- Workforce shortages severely affecting general practice
 - GPs reported
 - Overwhelmed by patient demand
 - Bogged down in 'red tape'
 - Unable to recruit GPs, nurses and suitably qualified staff in sufficient numbers


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Why Medical Assisting?

- Practice owners and managers reported:
 - Time-consuming difficulties of training newly employed staff to understand general practice environment
- Practice nurses reported:
 - Desire to participate in higher level patient services
 - Bogged down by admin duties and low level tasks
 - Concerns over non-qualified staff performing clinical duties

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Why Medical Assisting?

Table 1 **Who Performs What Duties**

GPpartners 2003 survey results from 152 respondent practices

DUTY	Practices without a nurse		Practices with a nurse	
	Receptionist	Practice Manager	Receptionist	Practice Manager
Assist with minor operations	18%	24%	11%	11%
ECG	19%	17%	11%	9%
Spirometry	11%	10%	11%	9%
Wound care	7%	5%	3%	6%
Immunisations	2%	2%	0%	6%
Ear syringing	2%	1%	0%	5%

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Course Development Process

- Focus groups of GPs and practice staff from 37 practices
- Groups provided guidance on:
 - Role name
 - Likely pay rates
 - Likelihood of practices to allow time off for training
 - Likelihood of practices to part-pay training
- Groups came up with 137 different duties for which they wanted an assistant to be trained

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Course Development Process

- Administrative
 - Appointment scheduling
 - Billing
 - Medical records
 - Inventory control
 - Recalls and reminders
 - Extraction of clinical and business data from practice software
 - Handling mail and phones
- Clinical:
 - Assisting with minor procedures
 - Wound dressings
 - Measuring height, weight, vital signs, visual acuity, hearing, colour blindness
- Clinical, continued:
 - ECGs
 - Measuring blood glucose
 - Urinalysis and pregnancy testing
 - Collecting and handling specimens
 - First aid and CPR
 - Assisting with emergencies
 - Instrument sterilisation
 - Administering Vitamin B12 injections
 - Spirometry
 - Phlebotomy
 - Removing sutures
 - Ear irrigation


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Course Development Process


- Legal and Medical Defence Organisation guidance
 - Administration of scheduled medications not allowed
- Widespread consultation
 - GP, nurse and practice manager groups
 - Government representatives
 - Consumers
- Formed Course Development Advisory Committee
- Initially accredited in Queensland

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Course Development Process


- Original course was offered for 2 years in Brisbane in joint arrangement between TAFE and GPpartners
 - 2 small student intakes with total of 13 graduates
 - Course was fully face-to-face at cost of \$7,450 per student (one year full time)



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Graduate Case Studies



- Student from general practice background
 - Practice wanted a flexible worker (both admin and clinical support)
 - Post course, practice has reported their MA has a predominantly treatment room role
 - “Demand for her skills in the treatment room is too high to spare her time at reception.”

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Graduate Case Studies

- Graduate employed as receptionist
 - Practice did not know what a medical assistant is; Resistant to allowing a non-nurse to perform clinical duties
 - Set up assessment process for every clinical skill; observed by principal GP and both practice nurses
 - “Our nurses were very impressed with her skills and gave her treatment room duties straightaway.”
 - Nurses are now performing home health assessments on selected days while MA covers treatment room



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Lessons Learned

- Creation of new roles requires close guidance by existing workers, i.e. grass roots clinicians, and must complement existing workers
- Clear role definition is needed
 - Legislative boundaries
 - Indemnity protection
 - Quality and safety
- Co-workers require training
 - How to best work with new roles
 - Task and responsibility boundaries
- Consumers also require information on new roles




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Lessons Learned

- Accessible, flexible learning environments are critical
 - On-line versus face-to-face
 - Self-paced, part-time
- Course fees must be realistic
- Best to target those already working in general practice



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Lessons Implemented

- Incorporated into National Health Training Package as Cert IV in Medical Practice Assisting (HLT 43307)
- May 2010 - new on-line medical assisting course
 - 37 students
 - Existing workers in GP & sub-specialty practices (skin & cosmetic)
 - Drawn from all over Queensland
 - 14 month course duration
 - 4 clinical workshops with in-practice clinical supervision
- Funded places
 - Federal “apprenticeship” scheme (employer incentive)
 - State “productivity places” (course subsidy)

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Medical Assisting Class of 2010




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The image shows a large group of approximately 30 people, mostly women, posing for a group photo in front of a building with a brick facade and a window display. They are dressed in a variety of professional and casual attire. The photo is set against a blue background that features the GPpartners logo and the title 'Medical Assisting Class of 2010'.

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Daffy Duck



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The screenshot shows a web interface for a course overview. At the top left is the GPpartners logo. To the right is the 'Daffy Duck' logo. Below the logos is a navigation bar with 'Home', 'Whistleblows', 'Contact Us', and 'Links'. The main content area is titled 'TERM ONE - Medical Assisting Course Overview'. It includes a calendar for May 2010, a list of course topics such as 'HEALTHCARE - Communicate and work effectively in health', 'HEALTHCARE - Comply with infection control policies and procedures in health work', 'HEALTHCARE - Handle specimens in a medical practice', 'HEALTHCARE - Confirm physical health status', 'HEALTHCARE - Work effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people', and 'HEALTHCARE - Work effectively with culturally diverse clients and co-workers'. There is also a 'Messages' section on the right side of the page.



Future Workforce

- Supporting current students
- Next course intake – February 2011!
 - Register your interest now
- Association for Medical Assistants
 - Ongoing skills maintenance

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Thank you.

www.gppartners.com.au

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