Succeeding in the Practicum

A Preparation Guide for Medical Assisting and Allied Health

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Preface

The title of this edition has been changed from *Excelling in the Externship* to *Succeeding in the Practicum* to reflect the updated terminology used by the American Association of Medical Assistants to refer to the off-site training component of accredited Medical Assisting and other allied health programs. This title change puts us in line with the accrediting bodies and professional organizations.

The progression from completing the allied health program of study to becoming a professional within the industry is bridged by the practicum. This practicum encompasses the time and place in which the student has the opportunity to begin building professional relationships and to show off his or her technical skills and unique talents in serving and working with others. It is a time when avoidable pitfalls should not interfere with various professional opportunities. To make the most of the practicum, students must be well-prepared to take on new challenges, act responsibly, learn proactively, and develop themselves professionally, which are all major goals of *Succeeding in the Practicum*.

The overall purpose of *Succeeding in the Practicum* is to present to students the full picture of the practicum experience. Student readers will realize the value and purpose of the practicum, will be prepared by being familiar with the expectations for all aspects of the journey, and will discover the benefits and opportunities that await them when they begin their careers with completion of a successful practicum. They also will be given tips on the various pitfalls and mistakes to avoid in order to excel in the practicum. Coverage of the practicum from preterm to postterm is provided to guide students’ focus and to help them maintain professionalism, responsibility, a positive attitude, and proactive learning throughout the process. The goal of this text is to prepare allied health students for a successful practical experience. In turn, this helps student-graduates to launch their careers with confidence, motivation, and meaningful experience. This also helps educational institutions send well-prepared students who intend to succeed to their partnering or affiliated offices, hospitals, pharmacies, and other facilities.

The content covered in this text is based on a significant amount of experience I have had with students and their practicums, which makes this worthwhile reading for any budding allied health professional approaching the practicum phase. Many colleges and educational institutions may offer, or do
not provide, very limited preparation for students in the specific, yet im-portant, aspects of switching on the professionalism required in allied health fields, which actually must begin before or during the practicum. This guide is intended to fill this gap in practicum preparation when significant face-to-face time between instructors and students for this purpose is unachievable within the established curriculum. It can be used concurrently with other related course material or as an independent study for students prior to beginning a practicum.

Succeeding in the Practicum is organized logically, beginning with introducing the purpose and value of the practicum. The text then maps out what the practicum site staff and the college or school expects of students. A chapter about practicum interviews focuses on preparing students who are required to attend an interview prior to beginning the practicum. Appropriate attitudes, etiquette, and the development of working professional relationships are discussed.

Next, how students are to fulfill the student role through following instructions and engaging in proactive learning is explored. Meant to serve as motivation for students, the next section discusses the priceless benefits of completing a practicum, some of which are tied to the specific training site. Material covering practicum evaluations and grades touches on the conclusion of the practicum phase. Real-life case studies follow. The final chapter explores the beginning of the job search for allied health careers.

Features of This Text

- **Tips from Professionals.** Brief sections throughout this guide provide up-front, practical advice. This is one of the most valuable features of this text. These insights based on the general experiences of industry professionals support the many topics in this text while providing information and recommendations.

- **Self-Prep Questions.** These questions are provided to guide and prepare students for each aspect of their practicum experience. They prompt students to think about what they will do when put into certain situations, as well as how to evaluate and improve their performance. An example from Chapter 3 preps students by requiring them to think of questions to ask in an interview, while examples in Chapter 5 focus on aspects of their etiquette that they can improve. Students will find ample room to write their answers.

- **Role-Play Scenario.** Each chapter presents a role-playing scenario for students. Directions describe how to set up the scenario, and questions lead students to observe what is wrong and what is right about how everyone acts. Space for recording answers is provided.
• Readiness Checklist. All chapters conclude with a Readiness Checklist to ensure that students understand all the objectives presented within the chapter. Students will find a place to check off the objectives as they learn them.

• Journal. At the end of this book, lined pages are provided on which students can take notes as they make their way through the program or can journal their practicum thoughts and experiences.

• Spotlight On . . . These features throughout the chapters highlight a variety of allied health specialties and how the practicum is important and beneficial in each area presented.

New to This Edition
This third edition includes a new full-color layout; updated, new, and expanded content; and several new features:

• New section on the right mind-set a student should have going into his or her site training
• Updated information on nontraditional interviewing, specifically phone and video interviews
• Elaboration on communicating effectively in professional relationships
• New section on communicating effectively with patient subgroups
• Overview and awareness of LinkedIn profiles
• More details on applying for jobs after the practicum
• Spotlight on Medical Assisting Certification
Acknowledgments

I would like to extend appreciation to the following reviewers for providing valuable feedback for the current and past editions of this text:

Peter F. Andrus, MD
Clinical Instructor
Albany Medical College
Albany, New York

Dominica Austin, BSN
Academic Dean
Lincoln College of Technology
Marietta, Georgia

Tricia Berry, MATL, OTR/L
Director of Clinical Placement
Kaplan University
Des Moines, Iowa

Beth Anne Buchholz, BS, CMA
Medical Assisting Department Chair
Wichita Area Technical College
Wichita, Kansas

Estelle Coffino, MPA, RRT, CPFT, CCMA
Associate Professor/Program Director
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White Plains, New York

Ursula Cole, MEd, CMA, CCS-P, CHI
Medical Program Coordinator
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Indianapolis, Indiana

Bernadette Cox, AAS, RMS, AHI, BLS Certified Instructor
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Cindy Garman, CMA
Medical Program Director/Director of Career Services
Akron Institute
Akron, Ohio

Robyn Gohsman, AAS, RMA, CMAS
Medical Assisting Program Director
Medical Careers Institute
Newport News, Virginia

Deborah E. Jacobs, RN, ENA, PCT
Medical Instructor
Dorsey Schools
Pontiac, Michigan
xvi  Acknowledgments

Francie Mooney, CMA (AAMA)  Janet Sesser, RMA, CMA, BS
Faculty Medical Assisting  Associate Vice President of Education
North Seattle College  Chubb Institute
Seattle, Washington  Phoenix, Arizona

Lisa Nagle, BSEd, CMA  Donna Stevenson, BA, LPN, CAHI
Medical Assisting Program Director  Allied Health Department Chair
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Augusta, Georgia  Largo, Florida

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