

A TIMELINE OF MEDICAL ASSISTING

A medical assistant is a valuable resource in the healthcare industry because of his or her versatility: part clinician, part administrative assistant, part counselor and comforter. Although they may not have been officially recognized by title until the early 20th century, medical assistants have been helping physicians at least since the days of Hippocrates and Galen.

The timeline of how long doctors have been around shows that “healers” have existed in some form for as many as 25,000 years. This likely parallels the history of medical assisting, as all doctors and healers have needed some type of help while performing their medical procedures.

400BC

Hippocrates, one of the founders of Western medicine, developed basic tenets that are still in use today: the limits of medicine, the search for benefits, bedside humanism, and the connections of teaching and practice.

200AD

Galen, a Greek, was personal physician to emperors and became known as the Roman Empire’s most famous physician. His medical doctrine became the standard in European and Arab countries for 1,500 years.

12th CENTURY

Europe saw the beginning of universities and the first medical schools during this time, and doctors applied what they learned to patient health. Whether it worked was hit or miss.

18th CENTURY

Doctors began developing immunizations for disease prevention, and they recognized cancer.

19th CENTURY

The first blood transfusion and use of anesthesia happened in the 1800s. Joseph Lister published *Antiseptic Principle in the Practice of Surgery*, stressing the importance of cleanliness, which had a dramatic effect on the mortality of surgical patients.

20th CENTURY

Typhoid, rabies and tetanus vaccines were all developed in the early 1900s, and in 1922 doctors began using insulin to treat diabetes. By 1928, antibiotics given to patients had reduced the rate of post-surgical infections. The early 1900s was when the medical assistant profession officially began.

1956

Members of the Kansas Medical Assistants Society decided to form a national organization to advocate for the education, certification and career development of medical assistants. The American Association of Medical Assistants was born and remains the only American association devoted exclusively to the profession.

1957

The AAMA designed educational sessions to increase the professionalism of medical assistants.

1963

The first Certified Medical Assistant (CMA) exams were given in Florida, Kansas and California.

1968

The AMA Council on Medical Education, in association with the AAMA, accredited the first 5 two-year medical assisting programs.

1966

A committee of the AAMA developed curriculum standards that would later be used to collaborate with the AMA (American Medical Association) in the accreditation of post-secondary training.

1978

The AAMA Basic Certification Examination was first offered twice yearly at nationwide test centers.

1977

Any student who achieved AAMA certification received membership in the AAMA.

1980

CMAs were first made eligible to revalidate their credentials, either by taking continuing education courses or by retaking the exam.

1997

A record number of candidates—13,000—sat for the certification exam, the most since its inception in 1963.

2000

There were more than 470 accredited medical assisting programs in 450 higher education institutions in the United States.

1999

The Certifying Board mandated that all CMAs have current status to work or else be recertified.

TODAY

As medical offices transform to a more team-based approach to patient care, medical assistants are filling expanded and enhanced roles. Because of technology — the introduction of electronic health records, more convenient data collection, telehealth and wellness-tracking mobile devices—the industry is always evolving.

THE FUTURE

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the medical assistant field is expected to increase by 24 percent nationally through 2024, making it an in-demand career option.

As medical offices transform to a more team-based approach to patient care, medical assistants are filling expanded and enhanced roles. Enroll in Florida Academy’s Comprehensive Medical Assisting program to learn the skills you need for a rewarding medical assisting career.