The Development of a Medical Assistant Training Program on Diabetes Care for Adults in the Primary Care Setting

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ABSTRACT
The primary care office, or medical home, is vital for providing safe, high quality care for patients with diabetes. As part of the primary care office team, medical assistants (MAs) comprise a large population of employed clinical workers. As a result, MAs often require additional training on diabetes care to support the healthcare provider in offering evidence-based patient education and care within a safe scope of practice. This project reviews the MA role in primary care and establishes a detailed training program to move an MA from the novice level to the competent level of performance in the outpatient setting. The MA training program provides education on the aspects of diabetes management, including key tests and measures to monitor health status. Upon completion of the training program, the MA will have increased knowledge to begin to perform in an expanded role within team-based care models.

PICO QUESTION
For certified medical assistants who work in primary care settings, does annual focused skill training, compared with standard skill training, in primary care settings, does annual focused skill training, compared with standard skill training, increase clinical skills competency within 1 year?

LITERATURE REVIEW
MAs are the largest group of allied healthcare workers in outpatient primary care offices (4). Studies have demonstrated that with further training, MAs can reduce the burden of tasks on the primary care provider and provide quality support particularly regarding the delivery of diabetes care to patients in the primary care setting (3). With further competency training and assessments an MA can:
- Function in an expanded role (1).
- Serve as a diabetes health coach (4).
- Support team-based care models (1).
- Support diabetes care at a reasonable cost (6).
- Support the management of large patient populations with diabetes (4).
- Serve as a diabetes health coach (4).
- Function in an expanded role (1).

PROJECT METHODOLOGY
The training program provides education for MAs on common diabetes medications, self-management tools, and key tests and measures for monitoring a patient’s diabetes health. A skills lab educates MAs on obtaining an accurate blood pressure and performing the hemoglobin A1C test. A clinical pathway provides the MA with standard procedures and tasks that will guide the MA to meet the outcomes of their role within a diabetes office visit. Additionally, the clinical pathway serves as an evaluation tool for the nurse educator to assess the MA’s progress from a novice level to a proficient level.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TRAINING PROGRAM
- Targeted for primary care clinics that are striving to improve diabetes quality measures, patient experience, and population health management.
- Designed to be facilitated by nurse educators in any primary care clinic location.

PROGRAM
- Diabetes Care Evaluation Pretest/Posttest
- Learning presentations
  - “Diabetes Care in the Outpatient Setting”
  - “Clinical Pathway; The Diabetes Office Visit”
- Skills Lab Learning Session
- Skills Competency Assessment

EVALUATION
- The Clinical Pathway Tool
  - The correct approach to a diabetes office visit
  - A guide for consistent care
  - A resource for the MA and nurse educator to measure progress toward proficiency in the care of an adult patient during a diabetes office visit.

CONCLUSIONS
For MAs who work in primary care settings, project provides a focused training program on diabetes care to increase clinical skill competency to perform safely in an expanded role within team-based care models. Using MAs to support the delivery of diabetes care can:
- Support the management of large patient populations with diabetes (4).
- Reduce staffing costs (6).
- Potentially increase patient satisfaction as they interact with an MA who is knowledgeable of diabetes.

REFERENCES