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The Woodlawn Organization
to be
answered
letter sent

January 10, 1966

Rev. Lynward Stevenson, President
THE WOODLAWN ORGANIZATION
1135 East 63rd Street
Chicago, Illinois 60637

Dear Rev. Stevenson:

We have made a survey of the members of the CCPA in order to determine their specific needs, both present and future, relative to the employment of skilled office assistants. With the advent of the current era of nuclear medicine and sub-specialized diversification of the field of medicine with its numerous ramifications, along with the current tendency towards group practice, we feel there is a growing need for medical office aids to have specific, quality training appropriate to the scientific trends of the day and the specific, individualized needs of the physician. We therefore, on the basis of this survey suggest that fifty physicians assistants be trained over the period of the next 18 months.

We are fully aware of the difficulty in securing adequate, skilled office personnel to service physicians in general and the additional problems encountered in order to secure efficient personnel to work for colored physicians. We feel that the current civil rights movement has opened the doors for many minority group individuals in heretofore segregated areas of employment. Thereby, many young people that would have in the past received training or have been hired as medical office aids, have secured employment and training for jobs in other fields as bank clerks, tellers, insurance clerks, grocery store clerks, receptionists in business offices, etc; thereby, there is a critical shortage of individuals, working or receiving training, for preparation as medical office assistants for our membership physicians. Furthermore, we can anticipate a busier patient case load for private physicians who will have to play a crucial role in caring for the thousands of geriatric patients under the recently enacted Medicare Law. Therefore, many physicians will have to augment their office staff to adequately care for these patients and generally, it can be anticipated that a large segment of minority group patients will be enrolled in the Medicare program and consequently there will be a further increment of individuals needed to work in the biomedical sciences.

We feel that the existing resources for recruitment and training of individuals in the

para-medical fields are unable to adequately supply the practicing physician with the well-rounded kind of person to most effectively and efficiently serve his clientele. Therefore, in order to provide for adequate personnel to assure the highest quality of medical care and to augment present office staff to care for the projected increment in patient load, the CCPA would like to endorse and initiate a training program in conjunction with the Woodlawn Organization to instruct young culturally disadvantaged individuals in the acquisition of skills related to the management, administration, clerical, receptionist and basic laboratory techniques of private medical office practice.

It is our goal to make this a highly stylized, individualized program to fulfill precise criteria and needs of the physician who is aware of the specific character and personality traits that are most important for establishing good rapport between physician and patients. We feel that personality assets with good ego strength is as important as the acquisition of superior medical skills in the selection and training of candidates for this program. Accordingly, we have set up the following guide lines to be employed in the trainee program:

1. All aspirants to be given appropriate psychological evaluation to determine if they have the personality traits deemed essential to fulfill the personality profile as established by our Board of Directors. Only in critical cases would this evaluation act as disqualifying factor in selection.
2. Basic courses in English, arithmetic, bookkeeping, typing and medical economics to be included in curricula and qualified instructors, preferably residents of the Woodlawn community to conduct this phase of the program.
3. The importance of charm, poise, appearance and social grace to be emphasized as office personnel have close interpersonal contact with patients and qualified instructors of a Charm school should be engaged to instruct trainees in this phase of the program.
4. Since many of our physicians have at present and can expect an increment in numbers of welfare patients, the curriculum should include informational material relative to social service resources, referral agencies, and ancillary medical aids as rehabilitation clinics, birth control clinics, well-baby clinics, services for the handicapped. A medical social worker should instruct this phase.
5. With the general awareness that minority group individuals have many frustrations and stresses that engender frank emotional disorders and the private physician is usually the initial contact, instructional material should give the trainee practical information as to how to recognize and handle the emotionally disturbed patient in private office practice. A psychiatrist should be the instructor.
6. Familiarity with specialized office procedures, instruments, prosthesis, medical aids (diathermy, x-ray, ultrasonics, physical therapy) and distinctive differences in methodology and treatment by the various specialties (Internist, Surgeon, OB-Gyn,

Pediatrician, Urologist, Dermatologist, Allergist) should be presented in a concise, abbreviated manner with visual aids, demonstrations, and lectures by these specialists.

7. Familiarity with important drugs used in office practice should be presented by a pharmacologist. A simplified glossary should be prepared and trainee should be familiar with the "Physician's Desk Reference." The trainee should have awareness of prescriptions and the special prescription used for prescribing narcotics.

8. Bookkeeping, filing, executing insurance blanks, death certificates, birth certificates, immunization records, VD reports, report of communicable diseases, sick excuses, certification procedures for mental patients should be explained and trainee given workable familiarity.

9. Instruction in answering the telephone, taking messages, operating small office switchboard, intercom should be given. Making appointments, how to handle the bereaved patient, the dying patient, the unruly patient, the hypochondriac and the malingerer should be given.

10. Pediatrician should give instructions as to how to handle the infant, preparation of formulas, counseling the anxious child, etc.

11. Visual aids, a model office and laboratory should be available to effectively simulate actual office practice and the last phase of the program should be "on-the-job" training in a physician's office.

12. Upon completion of the program, a formal graduation should be held and trainee presented a certificate with CCPA seal and signature of the Director of the School. A pin or emblem for office jacket could be designed with emblem of CCPA and presented to trainee as a visual recognition of his achievement.

Along with the overt benefits gained by the trainee in this program, there are many latent benefits as enhancement of the trainee's self-esteem through his interaction, confrontation and identification with the physician. This ego, gratification, in turn, can be transferred to other members of the trainee's family and serve as an inducement and motivation for other family members to become more ambitious and to escalate themselves from lower-class status. When the trainee secures employment in this field, the knowledge gained, the discipline, acquired, the enhancement of his personal appearance, increased inner security, acquisition of social graces and sophistication, confrontation with professional members of his own peer group will enhance his image and identification thereby allaying anxiety, insecurity and inferiority feelings and thereby enable him to more effectively compete and cope with the stresses and frustrations that heretofore have handicapped him and prevented him from functioning at a more mature level of ego integration.

The professional people participating in this program will also achieve better understanding and insight into some of the distinctive problems and personality differences of the culturally disadvantaged individual which in turn will enable him to establish better rapport and the ability to treat the psyche as well as the soma of the disadvantaged individual who needs compensatory medical care more than any other group of patients. The individual gratification and satisfaction of playing an important role in training your own office assistant will impart that personal touch that is so utterly lacking in our present automatum, computer era...after all, your finished product is just what the doctor prescribed!

Sincerely yours,

Kermit T. Mehlinger, M.D.
President, CCPA