

Assessment/Evidence

Completed worksheet
Class discussion

Adaptations for Beginning Students

Beginning students may work with partners or be allowed extra time to complete the worksheet.

Adaptations for Advanced Students

Advanced students may research medical assistants online to learn more about their roles and duties.

Teacher Reflection/Lesson Evaluation

This lesson was created by Middletown ABLE.

The Treatment For 'white Coat Syndrome': Medical Assistant Care KOAT.com

CCI (ARA) - No matter how important we know it is to see our doctor for regular checkups or when we're sick, for many of us the simple act of stepping into a doctor's office is a form of mental torture. Whether you just dread the possibility of a long wait, or have a full-blown anxiety attack with sweaty palms and a racing heart, "white coat syndrome" can be a debilitating problem.

Who do you turn to for help in easing the anxiety of a doctor's visit? It turns out, there's probably already someone working right there in your doctor's office that can help you feel more comfortable about your visit -- the medical assistant. The medical assistant is not only trained to handle both administrative and clinical duties, but is also someone who can make or break a patient's office experience.

Humor is an important tool [medical assistants](#) use to help anxious patients. A patient with breast cancer, for instance, felt that her interactions and running jokes with the doctor's office staff made her experience much more pleasant, according to Donna Patterson, former certified medical assistant. "We never treated people like sick patients, but rather like human beings. That's what kept people going," says Patterson, now the curriculum manager for the medical assisting program at Corinthian Colleges, which owns and operates Everest College and [Everest University](#).

"Compassion and empathy, along with a well-placed joke or humorous comment, lets patients know you're not walking on eggshells just because they're sick, but are merely treating them like any other patient," she says.

Ellen McKinley, CMA, an instructor at Everest Institute in Norcross, Ga., agrees. "A medical assistant uses good eye contact and body language to show the patient he's important and taken seriously." Medical assisting is a booming field, projected to grow by 27 percent or more through 2014, according to the U.S. Department of Labor -- growth that is largely due to the increase in the number of group practices, clinics and other health care facilities that need a high proportion of support personnel.

Because the medical assistant is often the first person a patient meets in a medical office, the way the medical assistant speaks, smiles or expresses himself affects the patient, according to Chris Spray, medical assisting instructor at Everest College's Reseda, Calif., campus. "A medical assistant can recognize patient anxiety just by observing body language," she says.

In some situations patients actually feel more comfortable talking to a medical assistant or RN than the doctor. Today, as doctors' patient loads become heavier, that sense of comfort with the medical assistant or RN becomes even more important.

"The patient load for the average doctor has increased tremendously over the last 20 years, making it physically impossible for the doctor to spend time reassuring anxious patients," says Dr. Fred Valdes, medical program director for Everest University in Pompano Beach, Fla. "In today's typical medical practice, the role of "comforter" has been assumed by the medical assistant, who can establish a personal touch which is so much a part of the healing process."

"[Medical assistants](#) also help minimize frustration and anxiety by processing such paperwork as insurance forms and test results," says Debra Lynn Penman, Doctor of Chiropractic a program chairperson at Everest College's City of Industry, Calif., campus.

Doctors' offices are working on other ways to make visits more pleasant, as well. Penman, who previously ran a chiropractic office, notes that white walls are the worst thing for anxious patients. "The office needs to be warm and inviting with walls painted in colors like peach, soft yellow or light tan with contrasting-colored furniture."

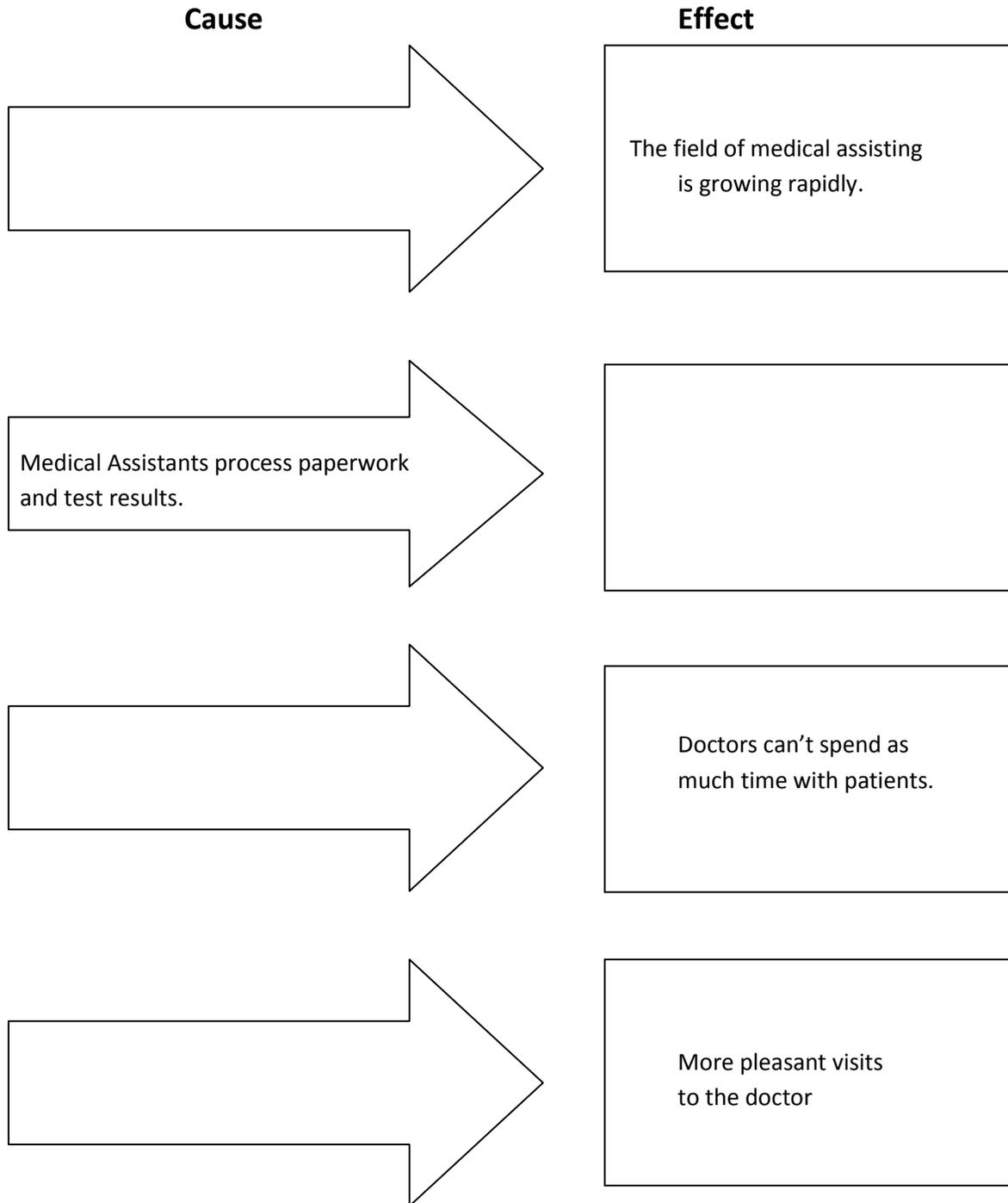
Penman adds that keeping kids busy is important too, especially when mom and dad are talking to the office staff. "At my office, we even had several hand-held video games for adults and older children. Remember, the longer that a person has to stare at the same four walls, the more anxious they are going to get."

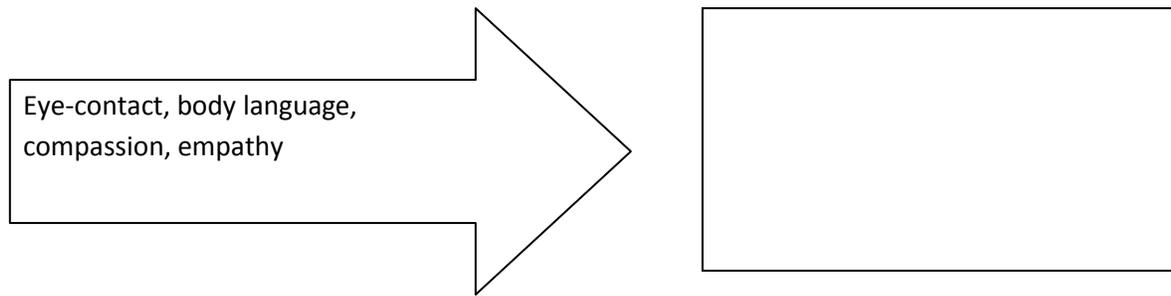
From a little nervousness to increased blood pressure, nearly everyone visiting the doctor experiences some anxiety. A medical assistant can help to allay that anxiety through calming words and actions and patients should seek out these individuals on every trip to the doctor's office.

“The Treatment for White-Coat Syndrome”

Part One:

Causes are actions or events that make something happen. Effects are the results or events that happen due to other actions or events. Complete the following cause and effect chart with details from the article.





Part Two:

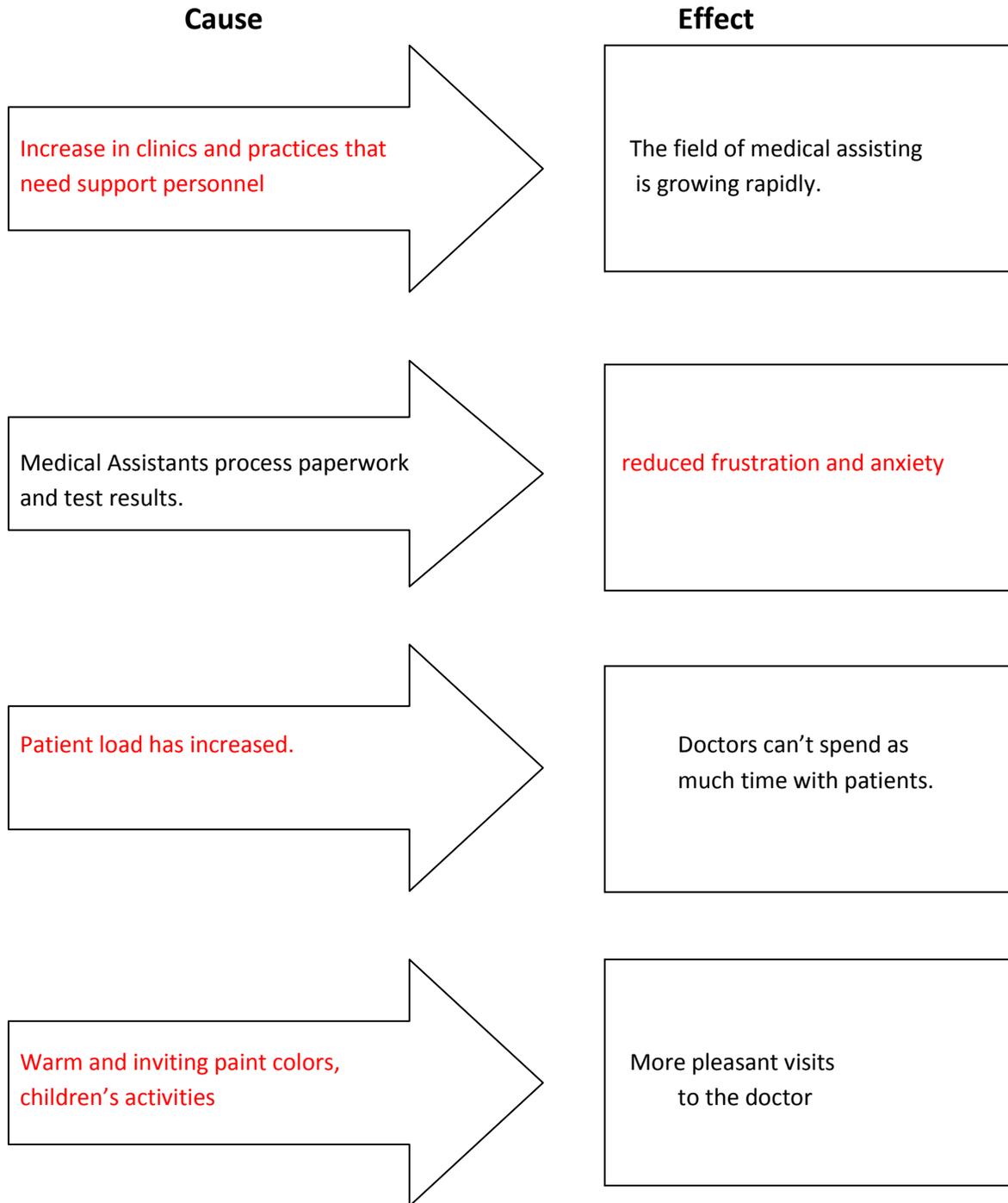
After reading the article, answer the following questions.

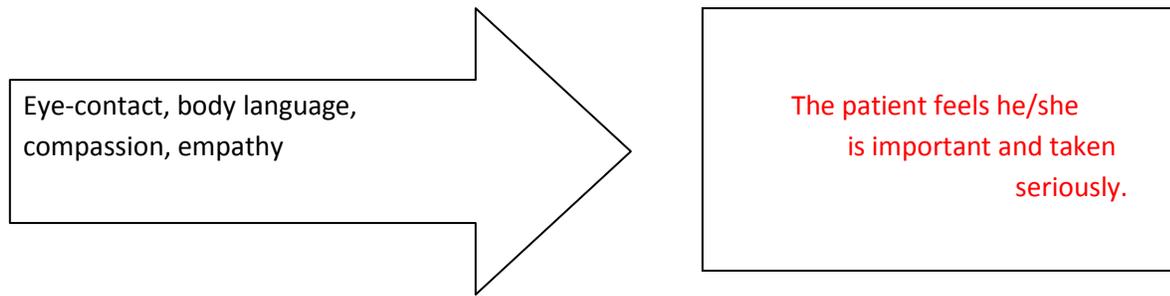
1. What is white-coat syndrome?
2. What are some duties of medical assistants?
3. What personal qualities or characteristics can help a medical assistant work with doctors and patients?

“The Treatment for White-Coat Syndrome”

Part One:

Causes are actions or events that make something happen. Effects are the results or events that happen due to other actions or events. Complete the following cause and effect chart with details from the article.





Part Two:

After reading the article, answer the following questions.

1. What is white-coat syndrome?

White-coat syndrome is a fear or anxiety when visiting the doctor.

2. What are some duties of medical assistants?

Medical assistants have both administrative and clinical duties. They can process paperwork, insurance claims, and test results. They also interact with (or comfort) patients.

3. What personal qualities or characteristics can help a medical assistant work with doctors and patients?

Compassion, empathy, sense of humor, kindness, etc.