

# CHAPTER 5

## Common Duties of the Chiropractic Therapy Assistant

- **Lesson Purpose**

To give the student knowledge of initial patient case history, the understanding of how to assist patients in pain, and how to create the optimal patient relationship.

- **Lesson Objective**

Upon completion the student will:

- Learn how to obtain patient case history
- Learn how to assist patients in pain
- Learn how to create the optimal patient relationship
- Learn the CTA's role in patient progress

*“I don’t know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know: the ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve.”*

*– Albert Schweitzer*

*“Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.”*

*– Henry Ford*

## CHAPTER 5:

### Common Duties of the Chiropractic Therapy Assistant

Review pages 69-88 of the textbook for this section of the workbook

## DEFINE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

*The goal of this chapter is to understand some of the common duties that many CTA's will be given or expected to perform during their daily activities in the chiropractic office. It will help prepare you for how to interact with patient's in a professional and confident manner. While every chiropractic clinic utilizes chiropractic therapy assistants differently, many of the guidelines in this chapter are universal in creating an optimal patient relationship for patients new and established alike.*

### Patient Interaction

*Remember that appearance can often play a role in a patient's perception of the clinic they have entered. Make sure you follow your office dress code and always keep your uniform clean and ironed. Review Figure 5.B on page 84 for other characteristics of a Professional CTA.*

Chiropractic therapy assistants often have more contact with the patient than any other staff member. It is important to look and act professional as well as being prepared for dealing with patients who are in pain, nervous about their treatment, or difficult to handle. You have the unique opportunity to educate the patient through the course of their treatment and act as a liaison for the doctor to provide complete care. If you are confident and competent in your abilities, patients will be confident in you as a healthcare deliverer.

When assisting a patient in pain, it is important to pay attention to what the patient is saying and also to what their body language is telling you about their comfort level. You want to look for problems, but also listen for them. Many offices utilize curtains or separate rooms for patients and it is important to listen for signs of pain or problems. When working with a patient, pay attention for some of the following to occur:

### Visual

- Grimacing or apprehension with movement
- Leaning to one side when walking or standing (antalgic posture)
- Reluctance to sit or stand
- Inability to support body weight
- Off balance
- Holding breath when changing positions

## **Auditory**

- Grunting or groaning
- Crying
- Restlessness in a bay (often a sign they are uncomfortable or the therapy may not feel good)
- Loud sighs or clearing the throat (the patient may want your attention but may not remember your name or want to call out)
- Coughing (may need water or a mint)

If you see these, or other behaviors in a patient, act quickly to provide a helping hand or offer tips to make them more comfortable. This helps to put a patient at ease, and may prevent further injury from falls or missteps.

## **Health History**

Many chiropractic clinics utilize CTA's in helping to gather a health history. Even in clinics where the history is gathered by another method, it is vital to know how to look at a patient's history and how the information will affect the patient's treatment and results.

Most health history and patient information gathered from a patient will be obtained two ways. Information the patient provides on their initial intake forms and information gathered by the doctor or CTA during an initial assessment or review of systems.

Patient intake forms will often provide the following information:

- Patient demographic information
- Chief complaints
- Duration and intensity of the condition
- Affect on activities of daily living
- Past medical history
- Medications
- Family medical history

Initial assessments or interviews performed by the CTA or doctor help to provide further information pertaining to details of the injury and a thorough review of body systems:

- Detailed information regarding the chief complaint
- Secondary pains or concerns
- Review of various organ systems throughout the body (not only at location of pain/symptoms)
- Information about current or past health habits
- Familiarity with chiropractic care and concepts

Many chiropractors will use the acronym **O. P. P. Q. R. S. T. U.** when gathering information about the patient's chief complaint.

### ACRONYM FOR CHIEF COMPLAINT DATA

- Onset* – *When did it begin?*
- Palliative* – *What makes it feel better?*
- Provocative* – *What makes it feel worse?*
- Quality* – *Type of pain – Is it dull, achy, sharp, shooting, etc?*
- Radiation* – *Does that pain refer from or to anywhere?*
- Severity* – *On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the worst pain possible, rate the pain.*
- Timing* – *What time of day do you feel it the most?*
- Understanding* – *What is the patient's understanding of his/her issue?*

By gathering this information from patients, chiropractors are able to make a more informed diagnosis of a patient's condition. Also, they are often able to identify secondary or underlying conditions that may be affecting a patient's overall health and well being.