

November 7, 1967

To the Members of the Council
West Virginia State Medical Association
Charleston, West Virginia 25300

Gentlemen:

Alderson-Broadus College seeks your advice and preliminary approval in the matter of fully exploring and structuring a curriculum for the training of licensed Physicians' Assistants as professional personnel. It is conceived that the College and Broadus Hospital (both fully accredited institutions) would jointly offer the academic and medical science course-work and laboratory experiences required for such an undertaking. The trustee boards of both corporations have expressed their approval of the basic proposition and have directed that this approach be made to the State Medical Association.

It would be the purpose of such a program to deliver to physicians persons of excellence (either male or female) who would be trained to serve as "another hand" for the medical doctor or surgeon. Such persons as Dr. Melford Rouse, President of the American Medical Association, and Dr. Hugh Hussey, Director of the American Medical Association's Council on Medical Education and Hospitals, have indicated their personal support and encouragement for this idea as one way of helping physicians, already in far too short supply. It is believed that relief from the necessity of performing strictly routine medical tasks would do much to free physicians for those phases of examination, diagnosis, and treatment which only they, personally, can responsibly undertake.

Journals both within and related to various segments of the medical profession, and organizations such as the United States Public Health Service (especially through its Bureau of Allied Health Manpower) have expressed grave concern over the great need to find a way or ways through which more efficient use may be made of physicians' service.

There have, of course, been various programs for the training of Medical Assistants, ranging from informal inservice experiences to two-year college courses. There are also plans to train assistants for such specialized areas as ophthalmology, pediatrics, and orthopedics. There are presently no plans, however, designed to provide a person trained in breadth enough to aid the general practitioner, the internist, or the general surgeon by helping relieve him of his time-and-strength-consuming daily tasks.

The physician's services are already much extended. They reach to bedside patient care through the professional nurse, and into the laboratories through the work of the professional technologists. None of these persons, however,

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either by educational purpose or training, is prepared to take his place helping the physician in his office, consulting and examination rooms, or on his hospital rounds and other duties.

The National Council on Medical Education, according to Dr. Hussey, has discussed this problem and the possibilities for solution which might lie in a program for Physicians' Assistants, but no institution has yet developed a curriculum. As presently conceived, such a program would require academic courses in the basic sciences and liberal arts, those nursing courses dealing with the study of disease as related to human health (as already offered by the College), certain basic courses in radiobiology, and certain courses in medical science especially designed to fit the needs of the student in his work as a Physicians' Assistant. Practical laboratory experiences would be provided throughout.

A representative of the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, the regional accrediting agency for Alderson-Broadus College, has assured us that this program would be compatible with our existing efforts and programs to train personnel for the allied health services.

In this project, therefore, the College and the Hospital seek indication of the support and preliminary approval of the idea by the West Virginia State Medical Association; aid in establishing an advisory council willing to work with us in detailing the total curriculum (which might also serve as a guide to other institutions seeking to establish such a program); and indication that the Association would be willing to help establish criteria of acceptability leading to licensure, thus insuring all those proper safeguards and standards which would serve to keep the certification under the control of the medical profession.

It would be our hope that, with your preliminary support, the specifics of the program might be outlined within the next few months, so that it might be formally opened to students in the fall of 1968.

Respectfully yours,

Richard E. Shearer, President
Alderson-Broadus College

Hu C. Myers, Member
Board of Trustees
Broadus Hospital

Walter C. Johnson, Jr.
Assistant Academic Dean
Alderson-Broadus College