

**Resource****Work Voices #3****Rita Cai – Dental Technician**

*It is helpful to view one segment at a time*

**Context**

Rita Cai is from China and describes how she learned English at Milpitas Adult School, and then went on to train as a medical assistant, eventually finding work as a dental assistant. She explains that she made this choice because she could not find work as a medical assistant at that time, but is confident that with a background in the medical field, ESL students will be able to find work however bad the economy may be.

A dental assistant ensures the dental office runs smoothly, learning front-office procedures like scheduling, billing and processing dental insurance, as well as prepping for surgery and helping with cleanings. It offers work in a growing industry.

Similarly a medical assistant ensures physicians' offices, hospitals or clinics run smoothly and serve the needs of the patient. They learn how to carry out medical procedures, collect laboratory samples, record medical histories, take vital signs, explain treatments to patients and assist the physicians with examinations.

**Preview activities/Introductory questions***Warm up questions*

How do you feel about going to the dentist?

What are the different jobs in a dental office?

*Beginning level*

- What is Rita's job title?
- What does she do?
- Why does she like her work?
- How long did she have to study for this job?
- What more do you want to know about her work?

*Intermediate*

- What would you need to know in order to consider this career?
- Have you or someone you know been to a health practitioner? What kind of practitioner or specialist?

## Vocabulary

Graduate, medical, dental, certification, private practice, sterilize, equipment, insurance, appointment

## Focus questions

- What is a dental assistant?
- What are her duties?
- What are the prerequisites needed for the training program?
- What personal qualities does Rita recommend?

*Discuss responses.*

## Post viewing

### Research

#### a Training courses

- Find training programs for a dental assistant
- Find training programs for a medical assistant

#### b Job opportunities

- What is the range of jobs that are open to a medical assistant?
- Look for jobs you can find with this medical training in your area.
- Investigate the range of positions – that is the different levels you can achieve in -
- Explore the pay rates at the different levels.

*Summarize findings for a and b in two paragraphs to share with the class*

### Reflection

- Do you think Rita likes her job?
- What questions do you still have about it?
- What are the best things about working as a dental assistant?
- What challenges or disadvantages are there working in this field?
- What skills does Rita use from the medical assistant training that she transfers to her dental assistant job?

*Write a short reflection paragraph in response to these questions*

### Role play

Practice with a partner making an appointment with the dental assistant to see the dentist.

### Contact assignment

Interview someone who is working as a dental assistant **OR** someone who works in the health field in a job that interests you. Record the interview if possible.

Post it to your class blog – if you have one.

#### **Further resources**

- **Health Education Resources for ESL Educators** [www.kqed.org/healtheducation](http://www.kqed.org/healtheducation)
- **[Health Care Training at City College of San Francisco](#)**
- **Milpitas Adult Education:** [www.adulted.musd.org](http://www.adulted.musd.org)  
Healthcare training in partnership with Boston Reed

## WORK VOICES TRANSCRIPT