

## If only the Medex School Had Prevailed

\*SEUN AYOADE

BSc (Hons) PHYSIOLOGY Technician Diploma in Electrical Engineering.

Independent Researcher. Alumnus, College of the Medicine University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

### \*Corresponding author

SEUN AYOADE, Independent Researcher. Alumnus, College of the Medicine University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

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When the Physician Assistant profession was begun in the United States half a century ago, there were two pathways. There was the MEDEX [Medical Extender] pathway and the PA [Physician Assistant] pathway. [1-3] Those who graduated from the physician assistant pathway affixed the postnominals PA after their names and those who graduated via the medical extender pathway affixed the postnominals MX after their names. The bloated egos of the doctors preferred the PA designation because it implied a practitioner that was subservient to them. If only the MEDEX School had prevailed, doctors and Pas in America would have a far more harmonious relationship than they have today. But which word, “extender” or “assistant” better describes what PAs do? The New 8th Edition of The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines an assistant as a person who helps or supports somebody in their job. On the other hand, to extend is defined as to make an idea or influence cover more areas or operate in more places. The latter better defines the profession. Let the founders of the profession speak for themselves

“The Department of Medicine of Duke University Medical Centre is establishing a program to create a new position in the health field... These individuals will become skilled in many areas of the medical profession, such as general patient care... They will be ca-

pable of EXTENDING the arms and rains of the physician so that he can care for more people. [4-5].

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