



Health Care  
CAREERS

# Is the Health Field for You?

**W**hile the economy continues its progressive recovery from the Great Recession, one industry never really took that big of a hit. Many say the health care sector is recession-proof.

If you're looking to enter a career with stability — not to mention great pay — the health care industry is for you. With a broad range of opportunities across many different disciplines, health care offers a diverse array of jobs and not just in traditional roles, such as physicians and nurses.

Health care organizations also need communications coordinators, marketing professionals, information technology specialists, food service providers — and the list goes on. Whatever your specialty, now is the right time to break into the health care industry.

## FAST GROWTH

Health care is the fastest growing job sector in the workforce, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. This growth can be attributed to the Baby Boomer population's entry into older age and federal health insurance reform that is increasing the number of Americans with access to health insurance.

Hospitals, nursing homes and assisted living centers are experiencing large influxes of patients and clients, and the trend doesn't look to end anytime soon. The health care industry needs professionals committed to a long career of caring for others. Do you fit the bill?

## GREAT PAY

According to the U. S. Department of Labor, with an associate degree, in some fields you can make as much as \$100,000. Higher degrees lead to more money, so it's obvious that pay is one of the biggest benefits to a career in health care.

Many physicians, who can average nearly \$200,000 in annual salary, can even land contracts in which their medical bills are partially or completely paid off by their employer. This is an extra incentive many hospitals have put in place to attract and retain the best doctor talent.

Other health care workers also can find employers or even government scholarships to cover their educational costs.

## AN EXCITING CAREER

One thing is for sure when you work in the health care industry: Every day is different. You never know what kinds of

situations you will be thrust into when you work for a hospital or physician's office.

If you like work that keeps you on your toes and is diverse from day to day, health care may be a perfect fit. Meet interesting people from varied backgrounds and put your skills to the test in the health care field.



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# Land a Job in Health Care

**T**here is a process to becoming employed in this competitive industry, especially in the fields of nursing, technology and administration. These are jobs with high demand for candidates and large pools of potential hires.

Once you attain your degree, certification or license, it's time to put it to work for you in searching for a new job. If you were fortunate enough to secure a great internship while in college, start there. Reach out to your connections within the company to see if there are any openings.

If you're transitioning from another career, it's important to find job opportunities that mirror the key skills you've developed in your other work. Research what it would take to become qualified for your target job in the health care field. You may have to return to school or work or take an entry-level position to make the transition.

## WHAT RECRUITERS AND HIRING MANAGERS WANT

In many instances, your background and personal achievements can set you apart from the rest. That's why it's important to track and document key projects you're a part of, even if you feel you're too busy to do so. Recruiters and hiring managers looking for new candidates want to know a few basic things about your background:

- How did you help your last employer make money?
- How did you help your last



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employer save money?

- How did you help your last employer expand its operations or patient reach?
- In which types of projects have you been involved?

There are other questions relating to your soft skills, interpersonal abilities and

passion for the field. Be sure you're ready to tell this story in an interview to make the strongest impression possible. Remember that your competitors are coming up with their own pitch, so make sure to highlight what truly separates you from others.

## KEEP YOUR OPTIONS OPEN

Don't be pigeonholed into thinking you can only work in a hospital or physician's office in the health care field. Government agencies, public health organizations and even municipalities all have professions in the health care field.

It's important to have a structured career plan, but don't be afraid to deviate from it for the right opportunities. Remain flexible in your job search and give strong consideration to any offers that come your way. You just might find your dream job along the way.

# Hottest Jobs

The health care industry offers many jobs featuring generous pay and add-ons, such as benefits, life insurance and even help paying down student debt.

Employee compensation is important to health care organizations across the nation because they understand that high retention numbers can lead to improved patient satisfaction.

With so many available jobs on the market, how do you know which field to select? If you are a new college student or a professional transitioning into health care, how can you make sure the direction you take is the right one?

The hottest jobs in health care aren't necessarily the ones at the top of the salary food chain. There are many mid-level jobs that don't require extended college training or high-stress workplace environments.

Some of them only call for a short certification process and can have many of the same perks and prestige that are attached to roles such as physician or administrator. Finding the role that is right for you all depends on how you want to spend your professional life.

The job search website CareerCast and the University of Wisconsin recently compiled a list of the hottest jobs in health care. Their list takes into consideration many factors, including salary, growth potential, stress and longevity. Other dynamics spanned the work environment, potential safety hazards, physical demands and hiring outlooks.

Here are the four jobs that topped the list with some general information on the tasks required for each position:

- **Audiologist.** According to the American Speech-Language Hearing Association, an audiologist's role is providing patient-centered care in the pre-



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vention, identification, diagnosis and treatment of disorders affecting hearing, balance and other issues.

- **Biomedical engineer.** Biomedical engineers work with colleagues and health care professionals to uncover new, life-changing therapies for a variety of medical issues. They are special-

ists in the design, development, production, research and testing of new methodologies.

- **Dental hygienist.** Dental hygienists are the right-hand support resource to dentists, handling oral dental exams, computer charting, digital X-rays, quadrant scaling and other dental work.

They work with all ages but can specialize in either pediatrics or adult care.

- **Dietitian.** Dietitians make a difference by directing and providing medical nutritional therapy to inpatients and outpatients. They assess needs, diet restrictions and current health plans to ensure overall patient health.

# Education and Health Care

**A** strong educational background isn't important for every profession you'll find on the job market. Some industries rely more on general labor skills or trade certifications.

Health care isn't one of them. Most jobs in the field require at least an associate degree, especially for professionals who will be making decisions that impact patient care.

Especially when you consider earning potential, the more education the better if you want to land a stable, good-paying job in the industry.

## **CERTIFICATIONS & DEGREES**

Some professions, such as dietitians and medical lab techs, require a minimum of a bachelor's degree to meet their requirements. Others, such as emergency medical technicians, massage therapists or nursing assistants, require you to undergo training in a certification program. In these programs, you'll pick up the related job skills required to fulfill your duties. You'll also gain a general understanding of the health care field and how different facets of it are intertwined.

Many certification programs last only a year — or even less — so they are definitely worth your time and investment if you're looking for a long career in health care. Associate degrees will take you a couple of years to wrap up, unless you start taking classes in high school to get ahead of the game. Be ready to devote four years to attaining your bachelor's degree. Reach out to your local commu-

nity college or university to see which types of programs are available in your area.

Make sure to ask good questions about the cost of tuition for the program and how much you'll be able to earn when you're finished. Different areas across the country pay at different levels, so take into consideration the location where you'll be pursuing your health care job.

## **SPECIALIZATIONS & LICENSES**

Many prominent medical careers offer specializations as well as advanced job titles. For example, a physician can specialize in pediatrics or oncology. Nurses can specialize in rehabilitation or bariatrics and can get further training or schooling to become a clinical nurse specialist or a nurse practitioner.

Most higher-level health care careers require you to be licensed nationally and by the state in which you live. These licenses expire, so be ready to pay the fee up front for the initial license and then again when it's time to renew.

Some states require you to undergo additional training throughout your career for professional development purposes. These types of educational opportunities are important to maintain a strong knowledge of how the industry is changing.



# Putting Patients First

**W**hat do you remember about your last experience as a patient? Was it enjoyable and professional, or have you changed providers because of a less-than-positive visit?

Now think about how you have shared your story with friends and family members. How many of them have pledged to change providers due to your personal experience?

Hospitals and physicians are more vigilant than ever before about the importance of outstanding patient care, and not just in terms of evidence-based outcomes. They want you, the patient, to have an amazing experience filled with positive hospitality and responsive service. In addition to the fact that your positive review could bring more business in the future, there is funding attached to insurance reimbursements that are based on patient satisfaction scores.

If you're entering the health care space, it's important to understand the science behind this new shift in focus. In a HealthLeaders Media study, 88 percent of senior health care executives said patient experience is among their top five priorities. That number increased even higher when executives were asked about their priorities five years into the future.

## **PATIENTS HAVE POWER**

When it comes to health care, patients aren't just patients anymore. They are



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customers, able to take their experience and review of your organization to the masses. With the onset of social media, anyone and everyone has the power to broadcast a message to their network.

As a health care professional, you want to make sure you stay on your patients' positive side. You can do this by remaining

courteous at all times and working hard to make sure their needs are met in a prompt, receptive manner.

## **MORE FINDINGS**

Many studies back up the importance of the patient experience, including the following:

- The Journal of Ambulatory

Care Management shows that systematic efforts to measure and improve the patient experience "can increase the effectiveness of primary care, improve patient outcomes and control costs."

- The UK's National Health Service found that "patients who are well informed and feel comfortable in their surround-

ings tend to be less prone to complications and subsequent readmission to hospital."

- The American Journal of Managed Care reports that "higher hospital-level patient satisfaction scores (overall and for discharge planning) were independently associated with lower 30-day readmission rates."

# Medical Sales

**T**alk to any sales professional and their goal is to make it into the field of medical device or pharmaceutical sales. The industry is booming and salaries are higher than they have ever been before.

Not to mention the incentive-heavy performance bonuses that many medical device companies dole out to their top sellers.

How do you transition from a career selling consumer goods, technology or services into one selling medical devices or pharmaceuticals? It takes some strategy in positioning yourself as a sales expert capable of taking on any type of product, but it can be done.

## UPDATE YOUR RESUME

Employers use applicant tracking systems to screen incoming applications for relevance. If your resume doesn't mention keywords such as "medical device sales," "pharmaceutical sales" or "health care industry," it's not likely to pass through these types of filtering systems.

Mention in your resume's summary that you're looking to transition, and highlight your key transferable skills throughout your document. These skills include relationship building, lead development, new business development, pipeline management, contract negotiation, major account management, consultative selling, revenue acceleration and executive relationships.

## HIGHLIGHT RESULTS

Results are everything in the field of sales. If you have an accomplished record of multimillion-dollar sales in consumer goods, recruiters and hiring managers in medical sales will be impressed. Make sure these results shine on your resume and LinkedIn profile. Make it easy for hiring

managers to find your results by creating a "Signature Achievements" section near the top of your resume. Choose three to four strong, numbers-based accomplishments and put them in bullet form.

## NETWORKING

Look back at your list of

past jobs. How many of those jobs came through a connection with a friend, colleague or family member? This is how a large percentage of jobs are awarded across every industry. This underscores the importance of making strong connections.

Start reaching out to your network of family and friends

to see who they know in the medical sales industry. Set up lunch appointments with new contacts to discuss their knowledge of any openings or companies looking for proven sales professionals.

You never know what kinds of doors you could open just by being proactive in your search.



# Top 20 Salaries in the Field

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, health care occupations was projected to grow 19 percent from 2014 to 2024, much faster than the average for all occupations, adding about 2.3 million new jobs.

This is welcome news to high those considering a career in health care. Salaries and benefits are on the mind of our next generation of health care workers as they weigh their various options in working while they gain their education or taking on student debt.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the median annual wage for health care practitioners and technical occupations (such as registered nurses, physicians, surgeons and dental hygienists) was \$61,710 in May 2014, which was higher than the median annual wage for all occupations in the economy of \$35,540.

Here are the top 20 salaries by profession in the industry, as researched and reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics:

Field	Salary
Physicians and Surgeons	\$187,200
Dentists	\$154,640
Pharmacists	\$120,950
Podiatrists	\$120,700
Nurse Practitioners	\$102,670
Optometrists	\$101,410
Physician Assistants	\$95,820
Veterinarians	\$87,590
Physical Therapists	\$82,390
Radiation Therapists	\$80,090
Occupational Therapists	\$78,810
Audiologists	\$73,060
Nuclear Medicine Technologists	\$72,100
Speech-Language Pathologists	\$71,550
Dental Hygienists	\$71,520
Occupational Safety Specialist	\$69,210
Genetic Counselors	\$67,500
Chiropractors	\$66,720
Registered Nurses	\$66,640
Prosthetists	\$64,040

