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Not all health care careers require a medical degree

When you asked a child what a medical career he or she wants to enter, you will hear, ‘I want to grow up and be a doctor,” or, “I’m going to be a nurse.” Have you ever heard, “I’m going to be a cardiovascular technologist,” or, “I want to grow up and be a diagnostic sonographer”?

For years, the standard mantra was that to provide for a family you had to have a good job, and to get a good job you needed a college education. However, while the recession took a shark-sized bite out of many incomes because of the job loss, reduction in job level or loss of investment nest egg, the cost of a college education increased unabated.

If you’re interested in a health care career but don’t want to go down the traditional path, consider the many health care jobs that don’t require a medical degree.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the health care profession will be fastest-growing segment of the workforce from 2010 to 2020. Jobs in health care are projected to grow by an average of 29 percent. These projections came before Obamacare changed the way health care systems will operate. The Congressional Budget Office estimates 39 million more people will be covered by medical insurance once the Affordable Care Act becomes fully operational.

Diagnostic Medical Sonographer

If you’ve ever had an ultrasound, you were most likely in the hands of a sonographer. A sonographer is a highly skilled professional who operates specialized equipment that sends a stream of high frequency sound wave into the human body to create images to be diagnosed by a physician. Sonographer has grown significantly during the past 20 years. The number of specialized areas of expertise continues to grow and sonographers can work in physician offices, hospitals, clinics, laboratories and other medical settings. Diagnostic medical sonography programs vary from one to four years and the median salary for a sonographer is $78,520 in 2013, according to the Society of Diagnostic Medical Solography.

Medical Assistant

No doctor’s office is complete without a medical assistant or two for each doctor on staff. A medical assistant might be the first and last person you see during your appointment. If you’re looking for hands-on work with patients, plus a variety of important tasks to make the office run smoothly, being a medical assistant might be the career for you. You could be responsible for the front desk, filling insurance forms as well as tasks like taking vitals, drawing blood, sterilizing equipment and recording medical histories. Although training is frequently provided on-the-job, there are one year certificates and two-year associate degrees offered by quality schools. The median annual wage in 2011 was $29,100 within the top 10 percent earning over $40,000. With entry levels requiring just a high school diploma, the competition may be fierce.

Get to know the people who hire medical assistants. For example, do volunteer work such as blood drives and free clinics for the poor.
Not all health care careers require a medical degree (cont.)

Registered Health Information Technician or Medical Records Specialist
With medical records going electronic, a skilled registered health information technician is a vital part of a medical team. The registered health information technician ensures the quality and accuracy of electronic health records and stores them appropriately. Coding diagnoses and procedures is an important part of their daily activities. A credentialed registered health information technician performs the following functions:

- Ensures the quality of medical records by verifying their completeness, accuracy and proper entry into computer systems.
- Uses computer applications to assemble and analyze patient data for the purpose of improving patient care or controlling costs.
- Often specializes in coding diagnoses and procedures in patient records for reimbursement and research.

An example of an additional role for registered health information technicians is cancer registrars-compiling and maintaining data on cancer patients. Most registered health information technician’s work in hospitals and physician offices, but you will find them in pharmaceutical companies as well. The projected growth rate for health information technicians is 21 percent and their median salary is $32,350.

Dental Assistant
Dental Assistants perform a variety of patient care, laboratory and office duties. They greet you at the front desk, keep your dental records accurate, send you a bill or take payment, sterilize dental equipment, prepare dental trays for the dentist and work with patients to assure they understand post-operative procedures.

That person handing the dentist the tools he/she needs to work on the teeth or putting that suction device in your mouth could very well be a dental assistant.

On-the-job training with high school education is where some dental assistants start out. To further enhance their career prospects, many attend community and junior colleges, trade schools and technical institutes which offer certificate programs. Job’s growth for dental assistants is well above average and median annual salaries are in the mid $30,000s.

Physical Therapy Assistants and Aides
With an associate degree in physical therapy assistance, or a high school diploma and on-the-job training as a physical therapy aide, you will help patients recover from injury or illness. You’ll help patients improve mobility, relieve pain and overcome the effect of disabilities.

Physical therapy assistants do hands-on work with patients as they exercise and recover. Physical therapy aides also provide support services around the office. If you like helping people, this could be your ticket.

Job’s prospects for physical therapy assistants and aides are excellent, with the Bureau of Labor Statistics projecting a 45 percent increase from 2010 to 2020. The average pay for a physical therapy assistant is more than $49,000 a year, and pay for a physical therapy aide is nearly $24,000 a year as of 2010.

Occupational Therapy Assistants and Aides
An occupational therapy assistant is similar to a physical therapy assistant in that in that you need a two-year associate degree. As an occupational therapy aide, a high school diploma should be sufficient.

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Other opportunities
The list of possible health care jobs that do not require a medical degree is long. Serious consideration and online research should disclose opportunities in the following additional careers as well as others:

- Radiologic technologist and technician
- Cardiovascular technologists and technicians
- Phlebotomy technician
- Certified nurse assistant
- Dental hygienist

Source: http://www.reviewjournal.com/

Not all health care careers require a medical degree (cont.)

Occupational therapy assistants and aides work with a wide range of patients who cope with long-term disabilities or illnesses. Assistants work more closely with patients, providing therapy under the direction of the occupational therapist. An aide will usually provide a support role to the therapist and the assistant. An occupational therapy assistant typically will work with occupational therapists to develop a patient’s treatment plan while the assistant carries out the plan with patient. The plan could be as simple as helping a patient learn how to move into a wheelchair from a bed or stationary chair, or it could be more complex, such as teaching patient how to cope with re-entry into the workforce with the loss of some motor skills. You might help one patient learn how to use his wheelchair, while another will need assistance with a daily stretching and exercise regimen.

Occupational therapy aides have less direct patient contact and are primarily responsible for preparing equipment and materials, filling out insurance forms and other paperwork and other office tasks. Growth for occupational therapy assistants and aides is projected as 43 percent and pay slightly higher than the physical therapy equivalents.

Pharmacy Technician
Pharmacy Technicians work under the supervision of a pharmacist in retail pharmacies, hospitals and other clinics. They take calls from physicians that order prescriptions, prepare documentation, record medication histories and work directly with pharmacist counting and dispensing medication. Attention to detail is a major requirement of this occupation. A 32 percent growth rate is the highest projected average growth rate of all listed occupations. A pharmacy technician should expect an average annual pay of around $29,000.
New study reveals fastest growing occupations through 2017

Eleven million Americans are currently looking for work, yet 45 percent of human resources managers say they are unable to find qualified candidates for their open positions. For job seekers, this might not make sense; for HR managers. It all comes down to who has the right qualifications right now. This skills gap is a growing problem for employers and workers alike, but it can be overcome.

What can job seekers do?

HR Managers have to decide between taking longer to find an ideal candidate and investing resources into reskilling or educating an applicant who has some, but not all, of the necessary skills.

A new report from Career Builder and economic Modeling Specialists Intl. on the projected fastest-growing occupations in the U.S. from 2013 to 2017 can give seekers the direction they need. “Projections provide an important look at the future of the labor market, and can be used to spot emerging trends that have implications for students and job seekers, as well as businesses and economic planners. Barring any major shocks to the economy, the short-term job outlook in the United States will likely continue developments seen during the recovery specifically, significant growth for jobs that require a college education and occupations in health care, energy and technology.”

The following list, adapted from the report, spotlights the fastest-growing occupations that are projected to see at least 8 percent growth and 30,000 jobs added from 2013 through 2017.

1. Personal care / home health aides - Projected growth: 21%
2. Marketing research analysts and marketing specialists - Projected growth: 14%
3. Medical secretaries - Projected growth: 14%
4. Emergency Medical Techs and Paramedics - Projected growth: 13%
5. Software developers - Projected growth: 11%
6. Medical assistants - Projected growth: 10%
7. Registered nurses - Projected growth: 9%
8. Network/Computer Sys. Admins - Growth: 9%
9. Pharmacy technicians - Growth: 9%
10. Landscapers/Groundskeepers - Growth: 9%
11. Social/Human Service - Growth: 9%
12. Computer systems analysts - Growth: 9%
13. Management analysts - Growth: 8%
14. Cooks, restaurant - Growth: 8%
15. Insurance sales agents - Growth: 8%
16. Nursing assistants - Growth: 8%
17. Licensed Practical / Licensed Vocational nurses - Growth: 8%
18. Combined food prep./serving - Growth: 8%
19. Receptionists and information clerks - Growth: 8%

Source: http://msn.careerbuilder.com/