Overview of Health Care Careers

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES
After careful study of this chapter, you should be able to:

1. List steps for planning a career in health care, pp. 99, 100.
3. Describe the typical work responsibilities; education, training, and legal requirements; employment; outlook; and average earnings of selected occupations in therapeutic services, diagnostic services, health informatics, support services, and biotechnology research and development, p. 101.

KEY TERMS
accreditation  certification  licensure  support services
biotechnology  diagnostic services  registration  therapeutic services
career ladder

More than 300 occupations and career specialties are available in health care among five key categories, including therapeutic services, diagnostic services, health informatics, support services, and biotechnology research and development.

To choose a career in health care, it is important to thoroughly explore the many opportunities and resources that are available. Libraries, the Internet, professional organizations, and people working in health care careers are good resources. You should also be informed about your particular career requirements. Many health care professions are subject to licensure from the states. Licensed health care professionals must practice their profession according to the guidelines and limitations set by the state in which they are licensed. Registration means that a health care professional has graduated from
an accredited school and has passed a standardized national exam administered
by a nongovernmental agency, usually a professional organization. Certification,
which is awarded by professional organizations, is generally optional but often
leads to more and better job opportunities and higher pay.

Because health care has developed into a multibillion-dollar industry and
is the largest occupational field in the United States, a health care career is an
excellent one to pursue.

BUILD YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Objectives 1 and 2: List steps for planning a career in health
care, and define and differentiate licensure, registration,
and certification.

Crossword

Complete this crossword puzzle using clues across and down to familiarize yourself with the terminology
of health care careers.
Across
1. Recognition by an outside agency, such as a national board or commission, that a school has standards that qualify graduates for professional practice
2. Field in which health care professionals determine the presence, absence, or extent of disease and provide data on the effectiveness of treatment (2 words)
3. Granted when the requirements set by a certifying organization to demonstrate mastery of the job are met
4. Career cluster involve managing medical information, using computers and other means to document client care or provide medical information to health care professionals, insurers, patients, and the public (2 words)
5. Hierarchy of careers in a given field (2 words)
6. Graduation from an accredited school and having passed a standardized national exam administered by a nongovernmental agency
7. Manipulation of genetic material in living organisms, or parts of living organisms, to make products and services
8. Field in which health care workers provide care for patients, directly or indirectly, or they create a therapeutic environment for providing care (2 words)
9. Authority granted by state governments for individuals to work in a certain health care profession in a particular state
10. Health care field in which treatment is provided for patients or animals to maintain or improve their health over time (2 words)

Down
1. When thinking about a career in health care, it is important to explore the many opportunities and resources available.
2. Offer books that give a broad overview of many occupations; books written by nurses, paramedics, and other professionals about their experiences at work; databases; lists of Web sites; and other references on health care careers.
3. Published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Occupational Handbook provides job descriptions, prospects, earnings, requirements, etc. to prospective employees.

Objective 1: List steps for planning a career in health care.

Jumble

After answering the questions below about planning a career in health care, use the circled letters to form the answer to this jumble (punctuation [e.g., hyphens, apostrophes, etc.] counts as a character).

Clue: When the future health care worker was trying to decide what specific career to pursue, she did what to follow in her mentor’s footsteps?

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3. Published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Occupational Handbook provides job descriptions, prospects, earnings, requirements, etc. to prospective employees.
4. On the Internet, you can find almost any information about health care occupations, including schools that offer programs of study to prepare for the career, interviews with workers in the occupation, and a wealth of other useful information.

5. Professional organizations represent most health care specialties, and both visiting their and contacting a local chapter are good ways of gaining information.

6. Spending a day on the _, and talking to people who work in that occupation, is often the best way to determine whether an occupation is right for you.

**Objective 2: Define and differentiate licensure, registration, and certification.**

**Short Answer**

After reading the section, “Educational Requirements” in Chapter 17, answer the following questions and be as specific as you can.

1. Define the following terms and provide example(s) of each.
   a. Licensure

2. Explain the key differences among the above three terms.

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**Objective 3: Describe the typical work responsibilities; education, training, and legal requirements; employment; outlook; and average earnings of selected occupations in therapeutic services, diagnostic services, health informatics, support services, and biotechnology research and development.**

**True or False?**

After reviewing the section, “Health Care Careers,” read the statements below and circle T if they are true or F if they are false.

1. T F Therapeutic services (providing treatment for patients or animals) jobs include physicians, physician assistants, medical assistants, surgical technologists, physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, occupational therapists, occupational therapist assistants, orthotists/prosthetists, respiratory therapists, paramedics, emergency medical technicians, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, nursing assistants, home health aides, audiologists, audiometric technicians, speech-language pathologists, speech-language pathology assistants, ophthalmologists, optometrists, optometrists, ophthalmic medical technicians, athletic trainers, pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, dentists, dental hygienists, dental assistants, dental lab technicians, chiropractors, massage therapists, dieticians, dietetic technicians, psychologists, social workers, veterinarians, and veterinary technicians, among others.
2. T F Physician assistants provide primary care in places where physicians are sometimes in short supply and also free up busy physicians by assuming responsibility for routine tasks.

3. T F Practicing as a physician assistant requires a driver’s license, at least 4 years of college, and recertification every year.

4. T F Physician assisting is not a popular field and is expected to grow by only 3.9 percent by 2018.

5. T F Although salaries vary depending on specialty, location, and experience, the median annual salary for physician assistants was $81,230 as of May 2008.

6. T F The basic difference between a technician and a technologist is education. Generally, technicians hold an associate’s degree, whereas technologists have a bachelor’s degree.

7. T F Professionals in diagnostic services careers determine the presence, absence, or extent of disease and provide data on the effectiveness of treatment and include cardiovascular technologists, cardiographic technicians, electroneurodiagnostic technologists, clinical laboratory technologists, clinical laboratory technicians, laboratory assistants, pathologists, pathologist assistants, phlebotomists, radiologists, radiologic technologists/radiographers, computed tomography technologists, magnetic resonance technologists, diagnostic medical sonographers, positron emission tomography technologists, and nuclear medicine technologists, among others.

8. T F For diagnostic scanning, the nuclear medicine technologist prepares and administers radioactive material, which is attracted to a particular part of the body and concentrates there for a brief time; the technologist then looks for lower or higher concentrations of the material than expected, which can indicate disease, and selects images to show the physician as well as doing some preliminary analysis.

9. T F Certificate programs for nuclear medicine are intended for health care professionals who do not want an associate’s or bachelor’s degree but wish to specialize in nuclear medicine.

10. T F It is projected that this occupation will add 36,000 jobs from 2008 to 2018, and that technologists who specialize in a particular type of diagnostic scans will have the best job prospects.

11. T F The median annual salary of nuclear medicine technologists in 2008 was $66,660.

12. T F Careers in the health informatics career cluster involve managing medical information and include health services administrators, medical librarians, health educators, health information coders, medical billers, health information technicians, and medical transcriptionists, among others.

13. T F Medical transcriptionists listen to recordings dictated by physicians and other health care professionals and transcribe them into medical reports, letters, and other documents, so for this occupation, accuracy, attention to detail, and knowledge of medical terms, jargon, and abbreviations are essential.

14. T F To be a medical transcriptionist, certification is required by the Association for Healthcare Documentation Integrity.

15. T F Job opportunities are not looking good for medical transcriptionists, who earn, on average, $15,410 annually.

16. T F Support services professionals provide direct or indirect care for patients or create a therapeutic environment for providing health care and include biomedical engineers, biomedical/clinical technicians, and industrial hygienists, among others.
17. T F Biomedical engineers create devices and procedures that improve health care by solving medical and health-related problems and have at least a bachelor’s degree, although a graduate degree is often preferred or required.

18. T F Biomedical engineering is the slowest-growing occupation in the United States, and it pays about $17.40 an hour.

19. T F Biotechnology research and development careers involve the manipulation of genetic material in living organisms to make products and services and include microbiologists, medical scientists, research scientists, and research assistants, among others.

20. T F To become a research assistant (involving managing instruments, monitoring experiments, analyzing data, interpreting results, and preparing technical reports and plans for experiments or studies), a person needs an associate’s degree in applied science from a community college or technical school.

EXPAND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Essay Question

From Investigate It activity number 2 in your textbook, write a brief essay describing in detail the health care occupation you chose to profile.