

HIGHER LEARNING HIGHER LEARNING HEALTH CARE HIGHER LEARNING HIGHER LEARNING

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The business of health care

A hot topic in higher education – and in today’s job market

BY TRACY KOLODY
SPECIAL SECTIONS WRITER

With the advent of federal health insurance reform, the fields of medicine and business have become inextricably linked as health care providers strive to understand the business of medicine.

Here in South Florida, both Florida Atlantic Univer-

sity and Florida International University are in the planning stages for offering dual post-graduate degrees between their colleges of business and medicine/health care.

“Today, it’s the business of medicine our students are trying to understand because the Affordable Care Act (ACA) changed things,” says Miriam Weismann, academic director of the Health Care MBA

program at FIU. “Business and medicine have to be connected since legislation and regulation are changing the model of health care delivery.”

Whether students are just getting started as undergraduates or are employed in the healthcare field, they see education as the best way to find a good job or advance their careers once they graduate.

According to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment in healthcare occupations is projected to grow by 19 percent through 2024, with the addition of about 2.3 million new jobs – significantly faster than the average for all occupations. Because the population is aging and since more people have health insurance due to the ACA, health care will add more jobs than any other group of occupations.

Higher education is adjusting to the increasing number of students seeking to improve their chances of winning one of these converted positions. Combining health care skills with knowledge of business and management procedures can provide a leg up in today’s competitive job market.

“At FAU, we see a good mix of students who are coming back to continue their education,” says Alan Whiteman, associate director of the Health Administration Management program at the university’s College of Business, which offers bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Health Administration.

“Our students include people who are working as a nurse or a physical therapist and want to move to the next level in their careers,” Whiteman says. “Today, moving into a management position in health care is almost impossible without an advanced degree.”

Two years ago, FAU added an Executive Master’s of Health Administration (EMHA) to the traditional MHA degree already offered through the College of Business. The executive degree makes it possible for working students to complete a degree program in health administration in two years or less, similar to FAU’s Executive MBA program.

That flexibility was one of the factors that attracted Jonathan Shaw, a registered nurse who works in a Miami-Dade County emergency room, to FAU’s EMHA program.

“I’m hoping to advance my career once I graduate in December,” says Shaw, a Coral Springs resident and married father of three. His experience

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Miriam Weismann, academic director of the Health Care MBA program at FIU’s Collage of Business.



Alan Whiteman, associate director of the Health Administration Management program at FAU’s College of Business.

Allied health careers enjoying robust demand

BY DENNIS RICHARDSON
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

With more than 80 careers, allied health professions employ five-million-plus people in this country — over 60 percent of the workforce in the health sciences.

The Association of Schools of Allied Health Professions categorizes allied health as the segment of the healthcare field “that delivers services involving the identification, evaluation and prevention of diseases and disorders; dietary and nutrition services; and rehabilitation and health systems management.”

Some of the allied health careers include dental hygienists, diagnostic medical sonographers, dietitians, emergency medical technicians, medical technologists, medical billing and coding, occupational and physical therapists, and respiratory therapists.

As our population ages and requires more medical care, demand for health services is increasing.

“The health sector is growing, and health support (allied health) is booming,” says Nora Powell, associate dean of health sciences at Broward College.

Many allied health ca-

reers are expected to grow much faster than careers outside of this sector over the next six or seven years.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, demand for occupational therapy assistants is expected to grow by 41 percent through 2024, emergency medical technicians by 24 percent, and dental hygienists by 19 percent.

Area colleges are providing training to meet that demand. Broward College (broward.edu), Keiser University (keiseruniversity.edu) and Palm Beach State College (palmbeachstate.edu) each offer more than a dozen allied health programs.

Palm Beach State recently began an ophthalmic medical technology program, which trains individuals to assist ophthalmologists, and eye physicians and surgeons.

The education needed for many allied health careers can be satisfied with a certificate or an associate degree, completed in anywhere from four months to two years of full-time study. That makes them a good fit for recent high school graduates and individuals looking to change careers.

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HEALTH CARE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

working in the hospital will be valuable when he is being considered for other positions, he says. "I'm trying to combine my hospital experience with what I am learning at FAU."

The increasing demands on nurses today mean that employers prefer to hire nurses with bachelor's degrees (BSN), rather than nursing certificates or hospital diplomas. Projections call for the current shortage of qualified nurses to continue, with the demand for nurses with master's and doctorate degrees for advanced practice, clinical specialties, teaching, and research roles far outpacing the supply. In South Florida, there are many nursing programs available offering bachelor's and master's degrees and beyond, but experts say it still is not enough to fill the expected need.

The shortage of qualified nurses, doctors and other health care professionals also stems from changes in the Medicare system. While the ACA affected health care reimbursement, it was the approval of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 that impacted the healthcare system itself most dramatically, says Dr. Frederick Littman, chancellor of the health professions division at Nova Southeastern University for the past 30 years.

It led to services provided by professionals such as nurse practitioners, physician's assistants and rehabilitation therapists being offered to patients outside of doctors' offices. As a result, demand for education in these areas increased significantly, Littman says, leading to an increase in the number of healthcare-related programs offered at NSU, as well as the creation of the College of Nursing and the College of Dental Medicine. The university also offers one of the four Pharmacy degree programs in the state, as well as a degree in Optometry.

"We saw that there was this

tremendous need" for health care education, Littman says. "We feel we've been very strategic – not just providing programs to create revenue, but creating programs where this need exists."

The number of potential patients continues to increase, as does the demand for qualified employees by health-care employers.

Keeping pace with that demand is one reason Melissa Whelchel decided to enroll in FAU's Executive Master's of Health Administration program. An administrator at Boca Raton Regional Hospital (BRRH), Whelchel says she was one of the first students to sign up for the program after it was launched.

"I knew in health care, those letters after your name really do matter," she says, referring to the "MHA" that now follows her name in hospital correspondence. Her peers at BRRH tended to have graduate or law degrees and Whelchel says she knew that if she wanted to get ahead, she would need an advanced degree to be competitive.

The program provided her with a refresher about some of the ongoing issues in health care, and updated her about the new requirements in insurance and payment systems following the ACA. "Plus I was able to apply what I was learning about at school to what I was doing at work. And I used some of my projects at work as the basis for papers I wrote for school. This program really worked for me."

Following her graduation,



Jonathan Shaw, an emergency room RN, is scheduled to graduate later this year from FAU's Executive MHA program.

Whelchel was promoted to Director of Strategic Development at BRRH, and says she continues to apply information she learned at FAU to her current job responsibilities.

A large number of doctors and nurses are choosing to expand their knowledge of business at FIU, says Weismann, also a professor at the school's College of Business, which offers a Healthcare MBA degree. "They get the benefit of studying for both the MHA and the MBA degree, which provides our students with a competitive edge once they graduate," she says. "If you don't understand the business of health care, you can't compete in today's marketplace."



Following her graduation from FAU, Melissa Whelchel was promoted to director of strategic development at Boca Raton Regional Hospital.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports the median annual wage for healthcare practitioners and technical occupations (such as registered nurses, physicians and surgeons, and dental hygienists) was \$62,610 in May 2015, higher than the median annual wage for all occupations in the economy of \$36,200.

Nursing remains the nation's largest health care profession, with more than 3.1 million registered nurses nationwide, according to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing. Government analysts project that more than 581,500 new RN jobs will be created through 2018.

ALLIED HEALTH CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

"For a lot of people, the emphasis is on getting (the required education) quickly, and what offers the best return on my investment," says Jack Sites, Ph.D., vice chancellor of academic affairs at Keiser University. "For many people that is an associate degree, particularly in health sciences."

Powell cites Broward College's dental hygiene program, which leads to an associate degree, as an example of a way to earn "a good living wage. All of our (dental hygiene) graduates are employed within several months of graduation," she says. "They come out making \$25 to \$30 an hour, and that's with an associate degree."

The \$55,000 average annual salary for hygienists is not unusual for allied health careers. For instance, the average annual pay for a diagnostic medical sonographer is over \$52,000; for a respiratory therapist, over \$43,000; for an occupational therapy assistant, over \$57,000; and for a physical therapy assistant, \$45,000. An associate degree is needed for each of these five careers.

Allied health careers also are a way to make a difference in the lives of others; and an opportunity to work in what Dr. Sites calls "health care's dynamic, constantly evolving environment."

Since the required education for many allied health careers can be completed in two years or less of full-time study, the associated cost is extremely reasonable.

"Our programs do not cost even half" of the average college loan debt for a four-year college, says Ginger Pedersen, Ph.D., dean of Curriculum & Educational Technology at Palm Beach State. "The cost is much lower and you get a high quality of education."

There is another reason careers in this sector of the health sciences are in such demand and of so much interest to perspective students.

Melissa Gerdes, Ph.D., associate vice chancellor of student services at Keiser University, refers to the 1:2:7 ratio of jobs in our economy. For every occupation that requires a master's degree or higher level of education, she notes, there are two professional jobs that need a university (4-year) degree, and seven that require an associate degree.

"You can see that in our hospitals," Dr. Gerdes says. "For every doctor, there are two nurses and seven ultrasound technicians."

It is not uncommon, she says, for people to use an associate degree as a springboard to other careers. As individuals work in the health sector, they see other opportunities — either to advance their careers or begin new ones — and return to school to get additional associate degrees or a bachelor's.

Certificate programs in allied health also can offer job stability.

Jacqueline Stawicki, associate dean of emergency medical services at Broward College, cites emergency medical technician as an example. "It's a very secure job. You can work anywhere."

Training for the certificate needed to become an EMT can be completed in just 16 weeks.

"Our programs fill quickly," she says. "We can't come close to meeting the demand for classes."



'Super Seven' allied health careers

Here are seven popular, in-demand allied health careers that require a certificate or an associate degree:

Diagnostic Medical Sonographer

As the need for diagnostic imaging tests increases, these professionals — also called ultrasound technicians — will be in even more demand. Diagnostic medical sonographers typically have an associate degree. The average annual salary is a little over \$52,000.

Respiratory Therapist

Also called respiratory care therapists, these specialists assess, help and treat patients with breathing and pulmonary problems. An associate degree is required for this field. The average annual salary is just over \$43,000 a year.



Dental Hygienist

Dental hygienists clean teeth, provide preventive dental care, examine patients for signs of oral diseases, and educate patients on ways to improve and maintain good oral health. An associate degree from an accredited dental hygiene program is required. The average annual salary is \$55,307.



Emergency Medical Technician

EMTs respond to emergency medical calls, care for injured or sick in emergency medical settings, and transport patients to medical facilities. A certificate from an accredited program is required. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average annual salary is approximately \$35,000.

Occupational Therapy Assistant

Working in conjunction with an occupational therapist, these individuals help clients recover from traumatic injuries and re-learn activities used in daily life, such as working, driving, grooming and getting dressed. An associate degree is needed. The average annual salary is a little over \$57,000.

Physical Therapy Assistant

These individuals assist physical therapists in treating patients who face challenges in movement due to disease or injury. An associate degree is required for this job, which has an average annual salary of \$45,000.



Medical Assistant

A medical assistant performs administrative and clerical responsibilities for surgeons, doctors, chiropractors and other specialists. Education requirements generally are a post-high school certificate or an associate degree. The average annual salary is about \$25,000.



HIGHER LEARNING HEALTH CARE

Certified coders in high demand

following ICD-10 implementation

BRANDPOINT

Nine years ago, Peter Esswein, a resident of Sandy Springs, Georgia, enrolled in a health information technology degree program at DeVry University to capitalize on the growing prominence of electronic medical records.

"I always wanted to work in the medical industry, and the time was right for a personal career change," Esswein says. "Completing my associate degree in health information technology gave me the confidence and skills I needed to progress on my new career path."

and Related Health Problems, 10th Revision, or ICD-10, increased the number of medical codes by more than 50,000 – and in fiscal year 2017, about 5,500 more diagnostic and inpatient procedure codes will roll out.

"The new codes are designed to enable more informative, accurate recording of the medical information required to bill correctly for reimbursement," Esswein says. "In my role, it's essential that I not only understand ICD-10, but that I'm staying ahead of what's coming next to help alleviate any confusion in my workplace and mitigate mistakes in advance."

To get these new grads up to speed, DeVry University offered an ICD-10 course at no cost for medical billing and coding graduates who had registered by November 2015 and students in their last semester of the program. All future courses will be taught using ICD-10 as the standard.

"DeVry University programs will continue to evolve as health care advances and becomes more accessible in the United States," says Kristyn Murphy-Rodvill, assistant national dean in the College of Health Sciences at DeVry University. "We know finishing a degree program during an industry transition can create obstacles for recent grads. Our ICD-10 course is designed to eliminate those barriers and prepare students with the skills and knowledge they need to be competitive in their field."

Knowledgeable health information technology experts – from coders to technicians and managers – are projected to remain in high demand through 2022. Medical billing is projected to grow by 22 percent in this time period.

"With the right education, the future is bright for health care professionals," says Murphy-Rodvill. "DeVry's programs are designed to help students grow their professional expertise, and remain at the forefront in their industry."



Now, as Esswein continues his career as a coding quality assistant, health care is changing again. Following the release of a medical coding system overhaul in October 2015, expected updates in the near future are underscoring the demand for coders. International Statistical Classification of Diseases

Cultural awareness, collaborative spirit: Building a culture of health

BRANDPOINT

People are more connected now than ever before thanks to the globalization of technology, international travel, commerce and industry. But this interconnectedness also means that health concerns, which were once limited to a community, can have a global impact. The Zika virus, the outbreak recently declared a global emergency by the World Health Organization (WHO), is the latest example of a foreign health issue that quickly raised concern within our borders.

Nurses are using the technology that connects us to prepare for this new reality. Through virtual simulation education, they are learning to care for diverse populations and practicing global health scenarios including epidemics, rare illnesses and other infectious diseases.

"Globalization has changed our approach to health care. Viral diseases can spread rapidly, so we have to be ready," says Dee McGonigle, professor in Chamberlain College of Nursing's Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) degree program. "Virtual learning environments provide valuable, interactive education on best practices for patient safety and disease containment in a real-time scenario that mimics real life."

Dr. McGonigle heads up the college's 3-D Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). During the Ebola outbreak in 2014, she and several colleagues built the Virtual Ebola Treatment Center (VETC) in Second Life, a virtual world created by its glob-

al community of users. In Second Life, users – known as residents – are represented by avatars that can walk, run, sit, stand, fly and interact with other residents.

Chamberlain students learned how to admit and care for Ebola patients by practicing scenarios in the VETC within Second Life. Faculty from the MSN Informatics specialty track facilitated and mentored students through the risk-free virtual learning experience.

Like the Zika virus, the Ebola crisis was a wake-up call that proved how quickly disease can spread and how important it is to be prepared. Seemingly overnight, health care professionals and students nationwide were tasked with developing expertise on a disease that was previously of little concern to U.S. citizens.

"Nurses around the world were looking for answers," says Dr. McGonigle. "We knew we had the opportunity to build a critical training tool to prepare our students to treat Ebola patients."

Chamberlain alumna Kellany Cadogan-Noland, now a clinical learning lab specialist at Chamberlain, utilized Second Life for her MSN Informatics Specialty Track nursing project. Second Life nursing projects are designed to help those who cannot complete them in a real-world situation because of geographic or other limitations.

Cadogan-Noland used the VETC to test potential responses to an Ebola outbreak in the United States. She collaborated with mentors around the country to determine

which infrastructures and clinical processes – such as clinical dressing locations for hospital staff – were most effective at disease containment. Within weeks of completing her project, the West African outbreak had spread to the United States. Cadogan-Noland and her team adjusted their VETC strategy to implement and test containment plans as they were announced by the WHO.

"I benefitted more from Second Life than I would have through an onsite project because we could adapt the virtual environment to our learning needs so quickly," Cadogan-Noland says. "I was able to quickly test scenarios through simulations. We couldn't have accomplished this within such a short timeframe in a brick and mortar facility."

Chamberlain faculty and students can easily adapt their model of virtual simulation education to address other emerging global health issues like the Zika virus, giving nurses like Cadogan-Noland an extraordinary window to the rest of the world. Dr. McGonigle and other Chamberlain leaders behind the VETC are planning more interprofessional collaboration in the future to explore new innovative applications of the virtual learning experience for their students.

"The quality of virtual learning is continually evolving with enhanced technology and feedback from putting simulation methods into practice," says Dr. McGonigle. "We have so much more to discover with virtual learning. We are just getting started as we use it this to educate nurses who will go on to transform health care worldwide."

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Healthy career outlook for health care professionals with law skills

BRANDPOINT

Career opportunities in the health care industry are expected to continue growing more quickly than in virtually any other industry, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Outlook Handbook. Not only is the health care industry expected to add more than 2 million new jobs by 2024, many existing roles will continue to evolve, creating additional opportunities for professionals currently working in what is a very broad field.

Health care law is one area seeing significant growth, thanks in part to the impact of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). It's one of the fastest-growing disciplines for graduate and post-graduate degrees, according to Lawyer & Statesman. The changes spurred by the ACA are also inspiring many professionals to learn more about the law to enhance their career opportunities and boost their skill sets.

"Health care professionals routinely find their day-to-day tasks affected by legal issues like regulatory compliance, risk management, malpractice, ethics, and patient privacy," says Scott Johnson, professor of law at Concord Law School, part of Kaplan University. "Recent laws

and regulations governing these issues and the delivery of health services generally make knowledge of health care law a real career asset these days. A background in law can help a wide range of professionals, from administrators to clinicians to technology entrepreneurs be more effective in their current roles and better positioned to seize emerging opportunities."

Legal expertise can benefit health care professionals and their patients across many aspects of the industry, but it is particularly helpful in three key areas, Johnson notes:

Regulatory compliance – Compliance professionals help providers prevent, detect, and correct any actions, policies, or procedures that are counter to the many regulations governing the health care industry. They also help promote ethical conduct. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996 propelled growth in this area and regulatory compliance has been one of the fastest-growing professions over the past 15 years. Health care professionals in a wide range of positions including those who work with electronic health records, Medicare or Medicaid requirements, or the various requirements from the Affordable Care Act (ACA) could benefit

from knowledge of legal issues related to regulatory compliance.

Ethics – A subspecialty of regulatory compliance, knowing legal issues related to ethics is particularly important for professionals working in facilities where research also takes place. Bioethical principles and standards cover areas such as human subject research, genetic privacy, patient rights, rehabilitation ethics and more.

Risk management – This discipline focuses on reducing errors to protect patients as well as health care employers. This includes provider and institutional liability, notification and apology programs, risk assessments, patient safety, and adverse event reporting.

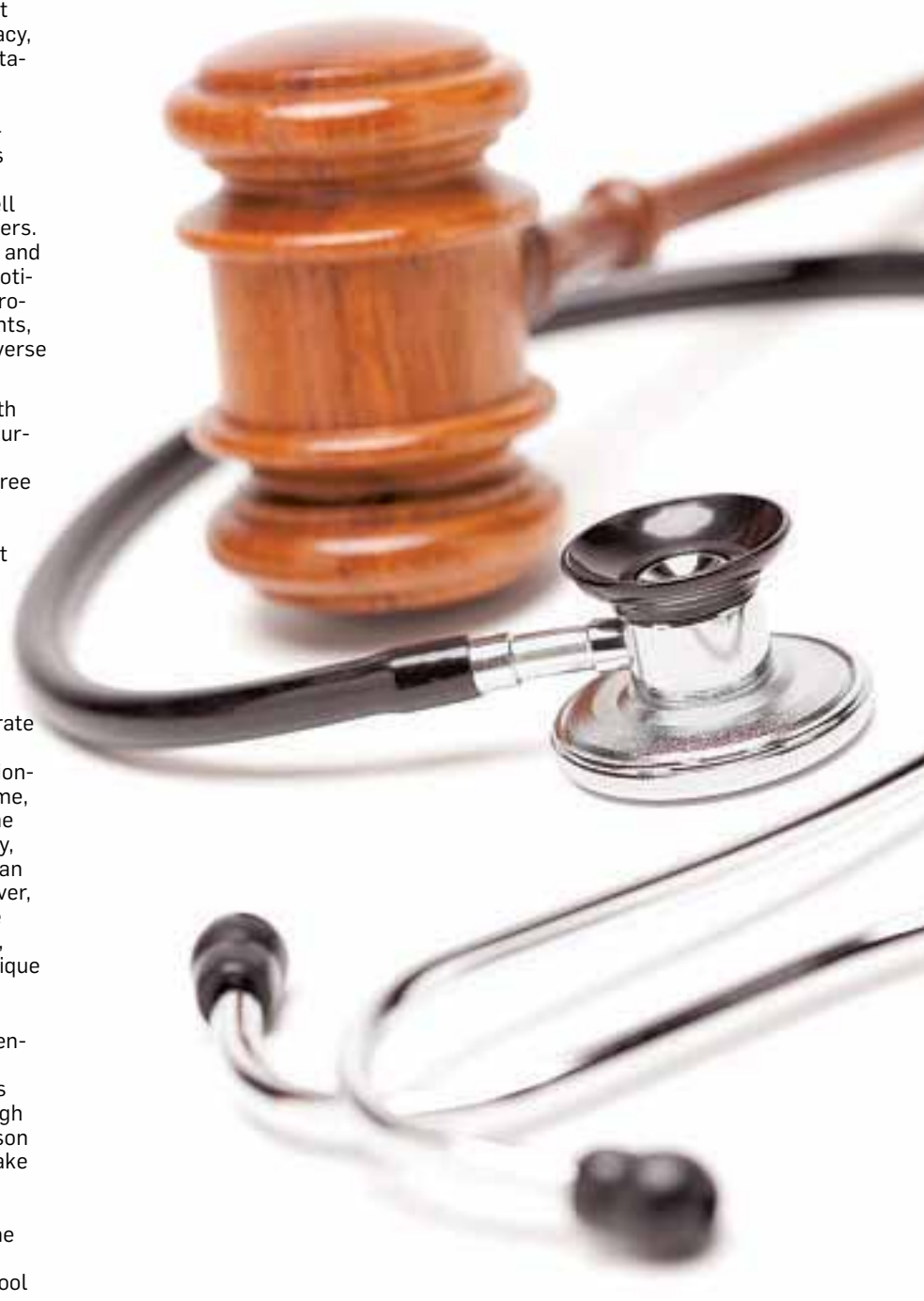
The growth of health care law has encouraged schools to create specialized degree programs for professionals seeking added legal expertise, but not planning to become practicing attorneys. For example, Kaplan's Concord Law School offers a health care law track within its Executive Juris Doctorate (EJD) program. Since most industry professionals are working full-time, and often outside of the typical 9-to-5 work day, going back to school can be challenging. However, as the first fully online law school since 1998, Concord provides a unique solution.

"One of the great benefits of the online EJD Health Law program is that it is offered through our law school," Johnson says. "EJD students take the same classes that our law students take and they learn from the same law professors. Attending our law school

provides EJD students with a thorough understanding of the law. They enjoy the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to analyze the law and explain its impact. Plus, they get to do all of it in a flexible, online program. EJD students can apply these skills by helping health care providers and professionals comply

with the myriad of state and federal laws that govern health care."

To learn more about Concord Law School and the health care law track, visit ConcordLawSchool.edu.



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Exploring holistic nursing

by addressing the mental, spiritual and emotional well being of patients

METRO

Nurses wear many hats. In addition to tending to patients and helping families of patients, nurses incorporate the latest technologies into patients' treatment. Some even work outside of hospitals and doctor's offices to train the next generation of nurses.

Nursing has also branched out to include holistic nursing, which employs alternative medicine to care for patients. Alternative medicine is sometimes combined with traditional western medicine, requiring holistic nurses, who are sometimes referred to as "complementary health nurses," understand both holistic and traditional nursing methods.

According to the Campaign for Nursing's Future, sponsored by Johnson & Johnson, holistic nursing is rooted in the idea that nurses cannot treat a patient's physical health without addressing the whole person. In addition to addressing their patients' physical problems, holistic nurses will also try to address their patients' mental, spiritual and emotional well being.

Holistic nursing is a growing field, and it's entirely possible that the role of holistic nurses will expand in the years to come. Some of the things today's holistic nurses do include:

- Acupuncture
- Assisting patients with managing stress
- Aromatherapy
- Massage
- Hypnosis, hydrotherapy and balneotherapy
- Chinese and Eastern healing practices
- Wellness coaching

According to the American Holistic Nurses Association, holistic nursing is not intended to negate the validity of conventional medical therapies, such as tradi-

tional nursing. Holistic nursing serves to complement, broaden and enrich the scope of nursing practices while aiming to help patients access their greatest healing potential.

The AHNA notes that holistic nurses must be registered and/or licensed. Such nurses may be found working at hospitals, universities and private practices.

Men and women interested in pursuing a career in nursing can learn more about holistic nursing at AHNA.org.



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