

access™

An allied health
industry journal



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nha 

Valued reader,

It's widely known that across the United States, our communities face a health epidemic of chronic disease; according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 60% of adults have one chronic disease, with 40% facing two or more. This epidemic, which impacts longevity, quality of life and the cost of healthcare, demands leadership and learning to help identify and deliver the care our communities deserve.

Working toward improving the health of our communities requires continually rethinking how we can best serve patients. We should challenge ourselves and the industry to answer the following questions:

- How can healthcare teams elevate clinicians at all levels, empowering them to serve patients at the top of their licenses and/or credentials?
- How can employers commit to hiring and developing diverse individuals to fill front-line roles, caring for patients in the way they want and need?
- How can educators bring innovative methods to the classroom, preparing students to graduate with the skills needed to enter the workforce, ready to collaborate and work in patient-centered teams?

In this third edition of National Healthcareer Association's (NHA) *access*[™]: *an allied health industry journal*, our goal is to bring light to challenges and opportunities where allied health professionals can make an impact. With the rise in chronic conditions and an aging population, the demand for and skills required of certified allied health professionals will only continue to increase. From improving interpersonal communication to enhancing training and increasing understanding of different cultures, we are pleased to provide you with actionable information that will help you continually elevate the work you do to improve the health of your communities.

Sincerely,

Jessica Langley, MS, B.S.R.T. (R)(CT)
Executive Director of Education & Advocacy



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The First Pharmacy Technicians to Give Immunizations: How Idaho Did It

Idaho was the first state to allow certified pharmacy technicians to administer immunizations — an advanced task that had previously only been permitted for licensed pharmacists.

By: Jeremy Sasser

Contributors: Alex Adams, Pharm.D.

Brian Hille

Samantha Thompson, CPhT

The problem: pharmacists need time to counsel patients

Research continues to show that when pharmacists spend more time with patients, better patient outcomes can be achieved.¹ But if more time with patients leads to better outcomes, why aren't more pharmacists doing it?

Too many tasks, too little time.

Unfortunately, most pharmacists don't have enough time to devote to patients because they have too many other tasks to perform — such as taking verbal prescriptions, verifying prescriptions, immunizing patients and transferring prescriptions to and from other pharmacies. These tasks often transpire concurrently, which can potentially divert pharmacists' attention away from safely completing their work, not to mention putting significant strain on workflow.

Can pharmacy technicians help?

A recent time allocation study by the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy found that between 21 and 41% of pharmacists' work could be completed

by minimally-qualified and advanced-practice pharmacy technicians, respectively.¹ Alex Adams, Pharm.D., former executive director of the Idaho State Board of Pharmacy recalls when the Idaho Board reviewed their data on a pharmacist's workday, finding that a significant amount of their time was spent completing duties that technicians could safely and comfortably perform. These are duties that do not require the clinical judgment that a pharmacist brings to the healthcare team.



“Our board [determined that] if pharmacists are spending a substantial fraction of their day doing technician duties, that means patients are not getting the full benefit of

what pharmacists can be providing; they're not getting the clinical or patient care services that pharmacists are well-qualified and capable of performing,” says Adams.

The Idaho Board reviewed what other state boards of pharmacy were permitting technicians to do, as well as their track records of safety. Overwhelmingly, decades worth of available data examining technicians performing such tasks as taking verbal prescriptions, transferring prescriptions, and performing “tech-check-tech” duties, among others, demonstrated that there often were no statistically significant differences in accuracy or error-detection rates between pharmacists and technicians.

If pharmacy technicians had been successfully performing these other tasks, why hadn't they been given the opportunity to administer immunizations?

“We didn't have any states to look to [for technicians giving immunizations], but we did have other healthcare professions we could draw from,” explains Adams.

In the medical model, a physician often delegates tasks to their appropriately trained support personnel, so the question became: “If [physicians] can delegate immunizing to medical assistants, why can't [pharmacists] have their appropriately trained support personnel administer vaccines?”

What is tech-check-tech?

Tech-check-tech is a process that gives experienced pharmacy technicians the responsibility to perform the final check of medication refills prepared by another technician. This reduces workload on the pharmacist, who can then spend more time counseling patients. In states that allow tech-check-tech practices, pharmacists reported saving as much as 30 hours per pharmacist per month, resulting in much more of the pharmacists' time dedicated to patient care.²



In the six months after Idaho's pilot group completed training, technicians gave 953 immunizations, with adverse events reported at rates similar to that of other immunizing healthcare providers.³

Ensuring patient and technician safety

With the exception of technician-administered immunizations, many studies have confirmed that other advanced duties can be performed safely and effectively by pharmacy technicians.

Additionally, data shows that advancing technician roles does not come at the cost of pharmacist jobs.

"I think when you look at the objective data, it's very hard to argue with from a safety standpoint, and it allows pharmacists to practice at the top of their education and training," says Adams.

To help ease concerns and give pharmacists the ability to supervise, a key component of the Idaho regulation is that these tasks can only be performed under the delegation of a pharmacist. This is important because pharmacists are in the best position to understand the capabilities of their support staff.

Empowering pharmacy technicians to administer immunizations not only amplifies

their role on the team, but also elevates the pharmacist's role and leads to greater patient care. However, technicians need the skills required to perform these tasks, so Idaho began a training program.

The first-ever immunization training for pharmacy technicians

The Idaho Board of Pharmacy granted a waiver to Washington State University (WSU) to develop and implement a technician-oriented immunization training that met the requirements of the board of pharmacy.

WSU partnered with Albertsons Companies in Boise, Idaho, to train the first 30 pharmacy technicians in the U.S. to administer vaccines.

Albertsons Companies was also the first to implement pharmacist-provided oral contraceptive consultations and prescriptions in both Oregon and California.

"[Albertsons is] a proponent of advancing and fully utilizing the capabilities of technicians," says Brian Hille, vice president of specialty and wellness services for Albertsons

Companies. Being the first to participate gave Albertsons the opportunity to "align very closely with the policy changes and to put best practices in place to be prepared to roll this out in other states as they adopt their own changes."



Having additional staff beyond pharmacists who can perform tasks:

- Elevates the role of both the pharmacist and the pharmacy technician
- Gives pharmacists more time to consult patients
- Balances workload
- Allows for greater efficiencies
- Could encourage more people to get immunizations

¹Berenbrok, L., Carroll, J., Coley, K., McGivney, M., (2018). Pharmacy Technician Role Expansion: An Evidence-based Position Paper [white paper]. Retrieved March 19, 2019 from <https://www.nacds.org/pdfs/pharmacy/2018/technician-talkingpoints.pdf>.

²Adams, A., Martin, S., Stolpe, S. (2011) "Tech-check-tech": A review of the evidence on its safety and benefits. *Am J Health Syst Pharm.* 2011;68(19):1824-1833.

³McKeirnan, Kimberly C. et al. (2018). Training pharmacy technicians to administer immunizations. *Journal of the American Pharmacists Association.* Volume 58 , Issue 2 , 174 - 178.e1.

The results

The initial round of training resulted in a nearly 100% conversion rate, with only one tech opting out of immunizing after receiving training due to having a low comfort level with the task.

“Any time you have the ability to use somebody else to do tasks within the pharmacy that could traditionally only be done by a pharmacist, it allows for a lot more flexibility in workflow,” says Hille. “As there are opportunities to advance the profession, we’re going to move our technicians in that direction because it makes sense to our business and it makes sense for the profession.”

Samantha Thompson, CPhT, is a technician for Safeway Pharmacy in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, and was the first pharmacy technician in the country to administer a vaccine.

With the support of her pharmacists, she provided a large number of flu shots in past seasons. She believes the design of her pharmacy promotes more direct patient dialogue. “Our Safeway has an entire waiting room and private rooms to give vaccines, which allows me to step out from behind the counter and away from the phone and other customers, [to] engage more directly with patients.”

Thompson has been a technician since 1986 and welcomed the opportunity to advance her skillset. Like many experienced techs, she has longed for additional responsibilities and growth.

“Having the opportunity to get more training, more education, and being more involved in the entire pharmacy process has been great,” she says.

This sentiment is one that both Adams and Hille hope will help to advance the entire profession. Both believe over time these tasks will become expectations, following a similar path forged by pharmacists that began immunizing in the 1990s.

The ability to perform these new skills are exciting and novel within the profession, but Thompson has found that patients are surprised these tasks haven’t always been able to be performed by technicians.



What the future holds

As the results of technician immunization become available, many hope that other jurisdictions will see the success of permissive technician practice and work to model Idaho's legislation.

"[Other jurisdictions] don't have to set sail for an unknown destination. There are plenty of studies out there that are published on these tasks with the exception of technician immunization, but the good news is technician-administered vaccines is currently being studied, and the results are forthcoming," says Adams.

As more technicians across Idaho acquire the advanced training to practice at the top of their license, both technician and pharmacist practice will continue to increase in scope, making way for continual improvements in patient care and healthcare delivery. The ability of technicians to do more has already led to greater patient engagement.

Holding national certification as a condition of being able to perform these tasks has also been a catalyst for some longtime practicing technicians to move forward with earning the "CPhT" credential.

As all of these pieces come together, the improvements in efficiency, the impact to care, and the demonstrated safety of technicians performing these duties will provide a strong case for adoption of similar regulations across other states, and perhaps even help to finally standardize technician practice nationwide.

Elevating and improving the pharmacy workforce in its entirety will be great for the field of pharmacy and patients alike. As Brian Hille says, "It's a fun time to be practicing pharmacy right now. Having technicians playing a bigger role that will allow pharmacists to do things like prescribing is going to be really important. It will make us successful." <



PREPARED FOR TAKEOFF: FROM TRAVEL AGENT TO CERTIFIED PHARM TECH

Carolyn Mayer

CERTIFIED PHARMACY TECHNICIAN

Carolyn Mayer worked as a corporate travel agent for most of her professional career, but after leaving the travel industry to be a stay-at-home mom, she learned about a career in pharmacy. At the age of 53, with a college background in math and science, becoming a pharmacy technician appealed to Mayer, who started working for Kinney Drugs just five years ago.

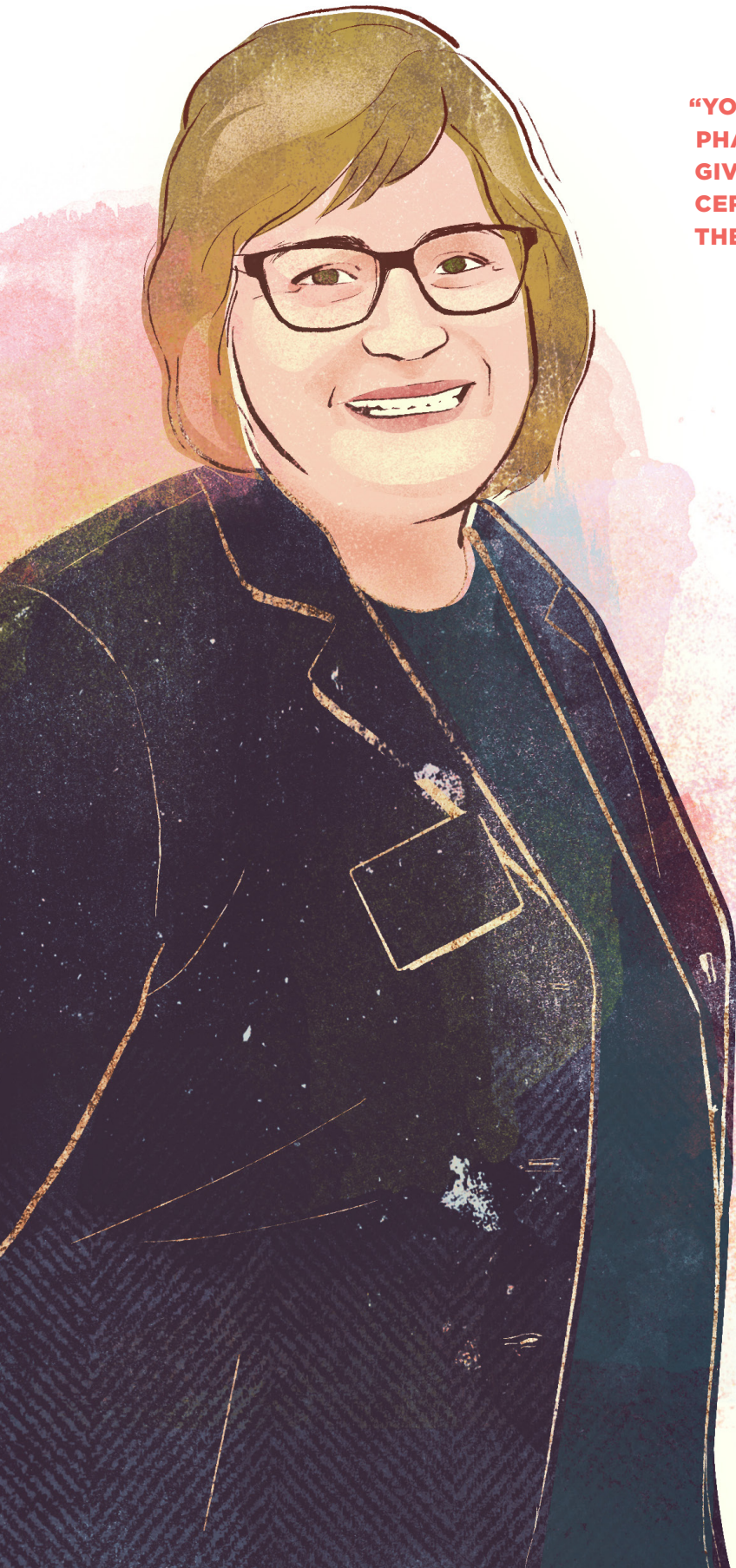
Today, she's a certified pharmacy technician (CPhT), who took part in the first national certification program offered by her employer. Over the course of three to four months, Mayer juggled working, parenting, and completing the certification program. Her employer built four hours of study time into her shifts each week to ensure she had adequate time to prepare for NHA's ExCPT certification exam.

"It was like taking a class. I did extra studying after work, in addition to being a mom and working. It was hard to balance everything. I wanted to succeed. I wanted to make my pharmacy proud," she says. "I even studied over the course of a family vacation to make sure that I had the knowledge to pass the exam."

Upon earning national certification, Mayer's role at the pharmacy evolved, allowing her to have more responsibilities.

"I'm often called on to help because they are confident that I have the knowledge to do the job correctly. I know when to bring in the pharmacist to make sure patients are counseled on their prescriptions."

Many pharmacies looking for pharmacy technicians view certification as a benefit, providing validation that a person has the foundational knowledge to do the job well.



“YOU MAKE YOURSELF AN ASSET TO THE PHARMACY AND TO YOURSELF. YOU WILL GIVE YOURSELF A LEG UP OVER OTHERS... CERTIFICATION HELPS YOU BECOME THE BEST YOU CAN BE IN YOUR JOB.”

While Mayer’s employer didn’t require her to become certified, it provided her with a supportive environment where certification was encouraged and made possible. Mayer says that of all the aspects of her job, her favorite role is helping people.

“I love helping customers,” she says. “Some of them are very sick and not feeling well...I feel like I am helping people every day.”

Her employer’s certification program was a positive one for Mayer, who is still exploring where else her career in pharmacy can take her. “I do know that I want to continue to learn. I’m always learning something new and working on something new every day.”

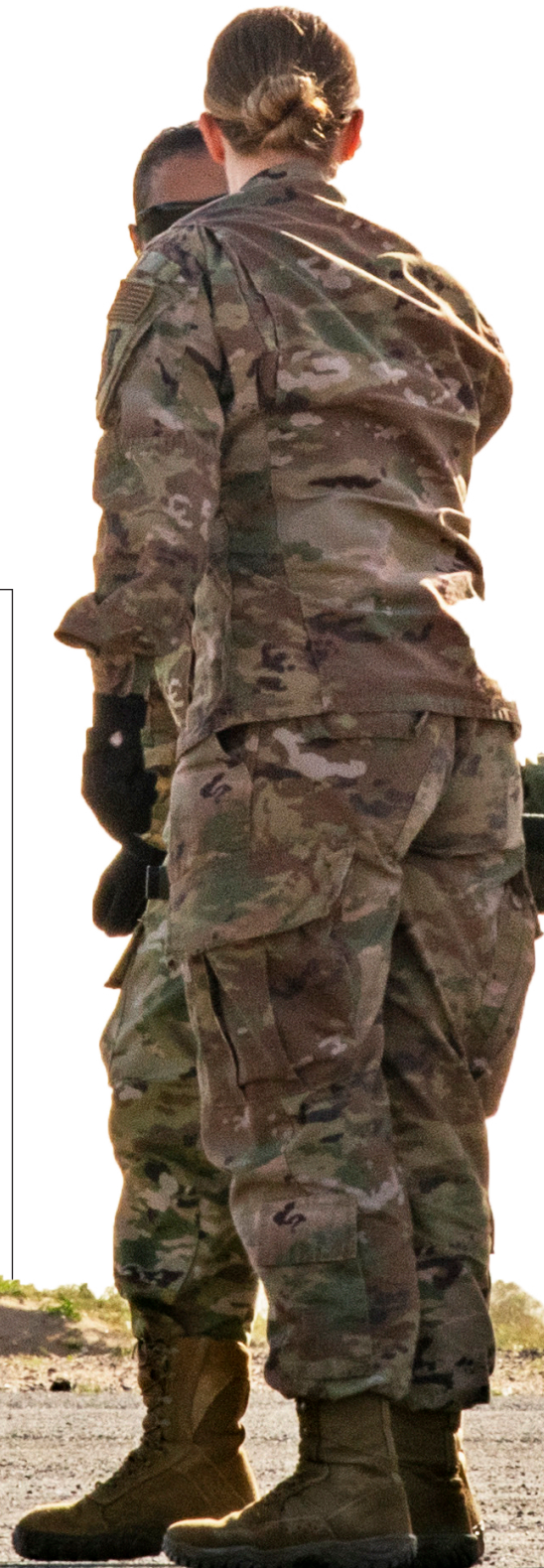
Within a growing field, pharmacy technicians can use their CPhT credentials to stand out in a crowd, Mayer says. She encourages others to take the exam for certification, “It helps you understand your job better and it will give you more knowledge. You make yourself an asset to the pharmacy and to yourself. You will give yourself a leg up over others...Certification helps you become the best you can be in your job.”

Translating Military Training into Certification in Civilian Healthcare

Contributors: Keith Boring, Phillip Trezza, RACR and Carl Vickers

Hiring in healthcare is difficult. Finding a person with all the right qualifications plus the professionalism skills that elevate performance is no easy task for employers. However, there's a large pool of potential candidates who have been trained in a way that instills a strong work ethic, cultural competence, and the leadership experience employers desire. Unfortunately, this group's training program is not well-understood, often leaving them overlooked.

Military service members annually represent approximately 250,000 candidates transitioning from active duty to civilian life.¹ Those who have gone through different forms of specialized healthcare training are more than qualified to do many jobs in healthcare. In fact, military occupational specialty (MOS) training programs have inspired private sector training programs that often try to mimic their level of intensity.





Strong Work Ethic



“My advice to him was to train until his skills became automatic, because when a situation gets hectic or dangerous, the ability to remain calm and trust the training is paramount.”

Veterans bring highly desirable characteristics to the workforce. Top traits include:

- RESPONSIBILITY
- SELF-CONFIDENCE
- RELIABILITY
- DISCIPLINE
- STRONG WORK ETHIC
- DEPENDABILITY
- PROBLEM-SOLVING
- ADAPTABILITY
- CULTURAL COMPETENCE
- GRIT
- COLLABORATION

The Medical Education and Training Campus (METC) is a U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) integrated campus that provides nearly 50 healthcare-related programs of study for military enlisted students. Located in San Antonio, Texas, its state-of-the-art facilities make up the largest allied health training center in the world.

Phillip Trezza, RACR, program coordinator for the Military Medics and Corpsmen Program (MMAC), Virginia Department of Veterans Services, believes the training that the DoD provides to medical service members is second to none. Trezza says, “What is most valuable about military medical training methodology is it instills an ability to work and deliver results in high-pressure and high-stress situations. For example, I had a new U.S. Army recruit ask me what my advice was so that he would be a good medic. My advice to him was to train until his skills became automatic, because when a situation gets hectic or dangerous, the ability to remain calm and trust the training is paramount. Expert training during high tempo and stress-induced situations is the ‘X’ factor that is rarely found in most civilian medical training.”

There’s no question that veterans who have completed military medical training have relevant training and experience, but because they don’t have the certification often required or preferred for allied health positions, they are faced with obstacles when transitioning to a civilian career. Without certification, it can be challenging for veterans to know where to start.

Navigating an unknown career path

Unfortunately, service members may not be aware of career paths in the private sector based on MOS. They often don’t understand how they can translate their extensive experience into a civilian career. Similarly, employers struggle to understand exactly how a MOS translates into a civilian health-care role. Earning credentials can help solve this issue.

“While working with over 400 medically trained veterans that have applied to Virginia’s Military Medics and Corpsman Program, we can certainly attest to the fact that medically trained veterans are not leaving military service with credentialing comparable to the knowledge, skills and abilities they possess,” says Trezza.



Photo by Sgt. Bethanie Sahms

“That is exactly why Virginia’s legislature and Department of Veterans Services created the MMAC program.”

Trezza explains that most medics and corpsmen earn their National Registry EMT-Basic certification during their initial job training, but they typically do not receive the credentialing that reflects their abilities. This is complicated by the highly-regulated civilian healthcare landscape.

“Once they cross that imaginary line from military life to civilian life, their scope of practice does not come with them, as they have no verifiable credential that civilian healthcare hiring managers and healthcare regulators can approve and accept,” says Trezza.

GPS for credentialing

To help service members access credentialing, in 2002, the Army launched its Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) program. By 2014, all branches of the military had adopted the COOL program to assist their service members in earning credentials.

COOL helps service members find the most direct path toward earning credentials that align with their MOS. The program also provides specific directions for how to obtain the credentials. Service members can obtain a voucher that covers the cost of the credentialing exam, and from there, they take the exam, fully funded by the military.

Today, the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps collaborate to share data, research, analysis, and best practices so that all service members can benefit from credentialing opportunities. All branches of the military recognize the important role that occupational credentials can play in professionalizing the force and enhancing service members’ abilities to transition to the civilian workforce after completing their military service.

When service members take advantage of the COOL program, they experience two main benefits: career advancement while they are enlisted and a smoother transition into civilian life.

¹ Dupree A. (2018, August 28). The transition from a military to civilian career just got easier. Retrieved March 26, 2019 from <https://www.careerbuilder.com/advice/transition-from-military-to-civilian-career>.

Career advancement

The DoD believes that credentialing programs improve force readiness and professionalism. Service members are encouraged to take advantage of their branch's COOL program early in their careers.

"The DoD supports civilian credentialing for active duty members because it improves the professionalism of our service members. In fact, if a credential is related to your military duties, completed academic degree, on/off duty training or civilian occupation (for Navy reservists), the services may pay for credential exams, applications fees, and annual maintenance fees," says Keith Boring, director, Navy Credentialing Programs. "Service members can increase their effectiveness and improve

their chances for promotion while on active duty, and at the same time better prepare for civilian employment when they do get out."

Transitioning into civilian life

Earning credentials helps service members show that their skills are equivalent to skills of their civilian peers. In some cases, employment may mandate credentials, depending on state laws or employer requirements. Even when not required, credentials can result in a higher pay rate. The Bureau of Labor Statistics tracks earning statistics and consistently reports that people who hold a certification earn up to a 46% higher weekly salary.²

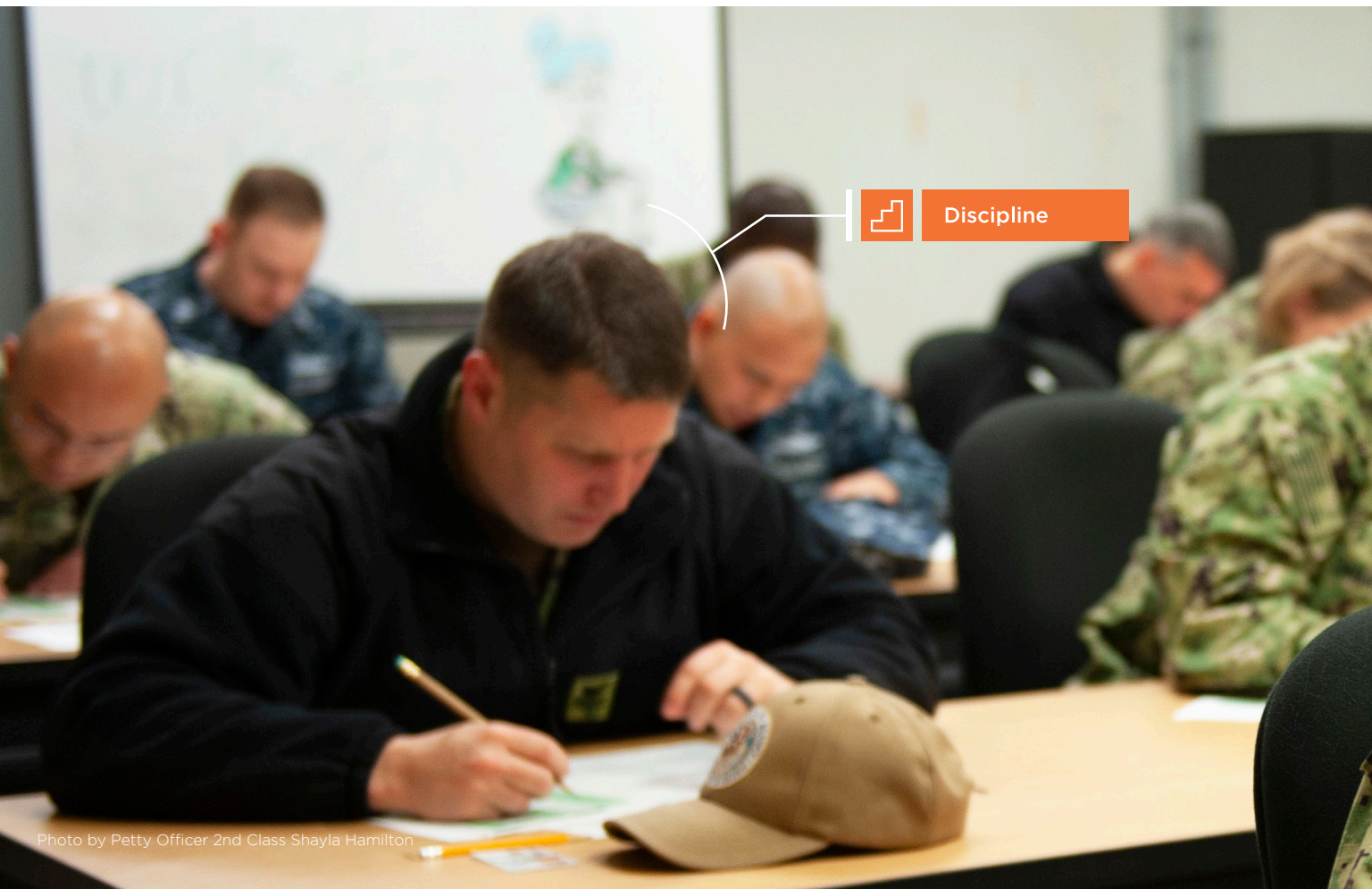
"A talent acquisition professional's dream is to have a pool of military veterans that hold the combination of education,

training and aligned credentials," explains Carl Vickers, Air Force veteran and military relations manager for People Scout. "When applying into the workforce, this is a recipe that makes candidates the most desirable and competitive in the employment market."

With the desired (or sometimes required) certification(s), veterans with military medical training and experience can be attractive to healthcare hiring managers.

The value of veterans in healthcare

Although healthcare jobs are in high demand, working in healthcare is undoubtedly challenging. Between increasing patient-care demands and a heavy administrative burden, healthcare professionals need to be equipped with



knowledge and experience to handle problems as they arise, and tend to them with a high level of detail. This level of responsibility for any one professional may be overwhelming; for many veterans, though, responsibility comes not as a burden, but as an opportunity.

“Responsibility provides meaning. Responsibility provides purpose,” states Trezza. “To a veteran, responsibility is empowerment. Veterans want to be empowered to do things. To change things. To make things better. To ask questions and to see if things can be done more efficiently and effectively. These qualities, coupled with a deep sense of attention to detail, could very well be a

driving factor of whether a healthcare system is profitable amidst increasing changes in Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) billing and reimbursement.”

As veterans work to transition to civilian life and translate their experience, training and skills to a career outside of the military, the COOL program gives them the ability to acquire nationally-recognized certifications that can help them secure civilian employment. Healthcare credentials can help empower them to find not just a job, but a career that’s relevant to the service they’ve provided to their country. This not only has the power to help improve

their quality of civilian life, but also to help fill in-demand healthcare jobs and, ultimately, to deliver high-quality care to the patients they serve after they leave the service. <

“To a veteran, responsibility is empowerment. Veterans want to be empowered to do things. To change things. To make things better.”

² The Bureau of Labor Statistics. Household Data: Annual Average. (2018). Retrieved March 26, 2019 from <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat55.pdf>.



A JOURNEY FROM FAMILY CAREGIVER TO CERTIFIED ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

Deitra Watson

CCMA, CPCT/A, CET, CPT, CNA

Finding your calling can often be a winding and indirect journey. For Deitra Watson, it was the journey that led her to a fulfilling, exciting career.

Watson grew up in a large family with five children in Maywood, Illinois, a small suburb just outside of Chicago. A high-achieving student, Watson especially excelled in her postsecondary education, earning both a Bachelor and Master of Science in accounting and a Master of Computer Information Systems Management. After completing these educational programs, she realized that while she enjoyed studying these topics, the job opportunities in these fields left her craving something more.

As she considered which path to take, she reflected back on some of the most pivotal moments of her life that shaped who she had become as a person. Often those moments included taking on the role of caregiver for her family.



"I figured out that my calling was in healthcare," Watson explains. "My mother and father passed away when they were young; my dad was 54 and my mom was 58. They both had many illnesses, including diabetes and high blood pressure. While they were sick, the majority of the time I was in charge of taking care of my younger siblings. Before my mom went to a nursing home, I was her primary caregiver."

A call to caregiving

The moment she considered a career in healthcare, she knew it was right for her. Though she had no formal experience in the healthcare industry, Watson decided to jump right into an education and training program at Tukiendorf Training Institute (TTI). From the start, she welcomed the challenges her new program offered.

"Medical terminology and the proper way of caring for someone was new to me. I had been a caregiver but did things my own way as a caregiver of a parent."

Working toward success

She decided to enroll in two programs from the start—the certified nursing assistant (CNA) and certified phlebotomy technician (CPT) programs. As soon as she completed these programs, she picked up the phone and called a nursing home she knew was hiring. It's no surprise that the nursing home saw her potential and hired her promptly.

She continued her studies while working at the nursing home, starting medical assistant and patient care

technician programs. When she wasn't working or in class, she studied relentlessly, knowing that her certification exams were on the horizon.

"Our teachers instilled in us that it was very important to study," she says. "I was listening to the things they were amplifying in class and those were the things I concentrated on when studying for my exams."

In December 2018, Watson was ready to take her certification exams. In just one week, she took and passed the certified clinical medical assistant (CCMA) exam, the certified patient care technician (CPCT/A) exam, and the certified EKG technician (CET) exam.

Impressed by her dedication and success, TTI awarded Watson with the honor of "Student of the Year."

Watson recently accepted another job where she's working a full-time role as an EKG technician. She's currently pursuing an advanced certification in rhythm analysis.

Pursuing her dream

As for her future, Watson has her journey mapped out. "I want to go 100 percent towards nursing in the fullest," she says. "I'm eligible to pursue a master's degree in nursing, and ultimately want to become a certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA)."

With her plan in place and her certifications to support her, there's no doubt that Watson is well on her way toward reaching her career goals. <

Finding Common Ground through Cultural Sensitivity

Contributors: Beth Boynton, RN, MS and Lisette Martinez, MBA

Every patient and every provider has a unique story. Ethnicity, economic status, religious beliefs, weight, height, gender identity...all of these factors and more can play a role in how each patient and each provider experiences and interacts with the world around them. These differences add complexity in the provider-patient relationship — but they also add opportunity to grow and personalize the care experience. That personalization can lead to improved communication, trust, and ultimately, to better patient outcomes.

What is cultural sensitivity?

Cultural sensitivity, at a basic level, recognizes that people are different, without assigning any value to those differences. A culturally competent healthcare provider understands that a person's unique experiences, beliefs, values, background, language, etc., all play a role in how patients perceive their healthcare service delivery, diagnosis and recommended treatment(s).

“Our culture influences many of our thoughts, behaviors, and feelings,” says Beth Boynton, RN, MS, a nursing consultant who helps healthcare organizations improve communication, collaboration, and culture. “How we feel about our bodies, what lifestyle choices we make, who we trust or not, what languages we speak, and even what happens to us after

death are health-related cultural differences. If and/or when to seek help, who to seek help from, what information is safe to share with doctors and nurses, whether there is shame around pain or disrobing, or if it is acceptable to ask questions, are all examples of how culture shapes responses to illness and treatment.”

Why does cultural sensitivity matter?

The ultimate goal in healthcare is to improve peoples' lives. Providing high-quality care requires that the provider and patient have a good relationship with a foundation of trust and solid communication. If cultural differences or biases create barriers, providers need to figure out how to remove them so they can be standing on common ground with the patient.

¹ Galanti, Geri-Ann. (2019). *Understanding Cultural Diversity in Healthcare: Case Studies*. Retrieved April 1, 2019 from <https://www.ggalanti.org/case-studies-field-reports/>.

“The person in front of us is not like us, so there’s a disconnect — especially if it’s someone who may look different from you, speak different from you or have different beliefs,” says Lisette Martinez, MBA, chief diversity and inclusion officer at Yale New Haven Health.

Martinez works to create a more inclusive environment in the healthcare system, and strives to help healthcare providers fill the gaps by helping them understand how to best communicate and build trust with their diverse patients. The courses she leads for Yale New Haven Health equip healthcare professionals with communication tools so they know the types of questions to ask patients. “Whatever religion, whatever language, whatever culture, whatever gender identity, whatever

mobility issues...we teach [the care providers] how to ask the correct questions to get to where [the patients] are in order to treat them the way they want to be treated,” she says.

Asking the right questions and removing biases can mean the difference between understanding and anger, sickness and health, and in some cases, life and death, as it was in a case study published on Dr. Geri-Ann Galanti’s website, “Understanding Cultural Diversity in Healthcare.”

Lamar Johnson, a 33-year-old African American patient, kept returning to the hospital with extreme headaches. The staff had labeled him a “frequent flyer” and considered him a “drug seeker.” Each time he came to the hospital, he was sent home with pain

medication. One nurse’s instincts said there was more to the story, but “she saw his tattoos, observed his rough demeanor, and went along with what everyone else was saying.” Tragically, while she was taking him to get a CT scan, he herniated and died. He had a rare form of meningitis that was actually causing his severe headaches.

“If some of the staff had not stereotyped him as a drug seeker on one of his earlier visits, perhaps his life could have been saved,” the case study reads. “This incident left a lasting impression on Courtney [the nurse], who vowed never to judge a patient on his looks, and to trust her instincts, rather than let others influence her nursing care.”¹





Can cultural sensitivity be learned?

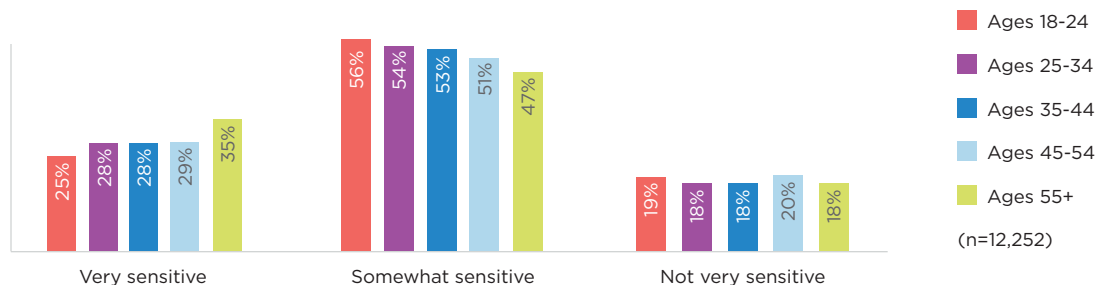
Tragedies such as Mr. Johnson's might be preventable with the right education. Unfortunately, traditional healthcare curriculum often neglects to address cultural sensitivity. Boynton says that these educational programs are full of clinical studies that leave little time for focusing on humanities. Despite this, care providers' genuine compassion for their patients compels them to want to learn more to help their diverse patients.

That's where experts like Boynton and Martinez come into play as they are helping current and future healthcare professionals improve cultural competence through education.

Although healthcare providers can't be experts on every culture, they can improve interpersonal skills that can help them better communicate with, understand, and serve their patients. Two skills that Boynton and Martinez emphasize are asking the right questions and listening.

"I'm talking about beyond the kind of listening we do to assess heart or lung sounds or to check off boxes on a form about health history," Boynton says. "The kind of listening that includes putting down our pens or computer screens and listening to what feels important or worrisome to our patients."

Do patients feel that their primary care practices understand and are sensitive to their cultural backgrounds when developing their care plans?²





Listening is key, but before you can listen you have to ask the right questions. To help healthcare professionals in their discovery to understand the patient's point of view, Martinez utilizes "The 4C's of Culture," developed by Drs. Stuart Slavin, Alice Kuo and Geri-Ann Galanti.³

The idea is to ask questions that aim to identify a patient's perceptions of their condition and possible treatments, as well as the patient's beliefs that may affect any course of action.

Curriculum such as "The 4C's of Culture" can be included in virtually any education program, from a traditional classroom, to online education, to employer-sponsored training. To help narrow the focus of educational content, Boynton suggests reaching out to organizations that support minority groups at a local level, so that training reflects diversity in a particular community. At Yale New Haven Health, Martinez uses responses from cultural competency-related questions on patient satisfaction

surveys to identify where improvement is needed — at the organization level and at the department level. Programs like these can ensure that when healthcare providers make it a priority to fit education into their schedules, they are learning relevant information that can immediately help them provide better care.

The 4C's of Culture

1. What do you CALL your problem?
2. What do you think CAUSED your problem?
3. How do you COPE with your condition?
4. What CONCERNS do you have regarding your condition?

² Branded Research. (2019). Healthcare and Cultural Sensitivity Poll, fielded February 9, 2019.

³ Galanti, Geri-Ann. (2019). Understanding Cultural Diversity in Healthcare: The 4C's of Culture. Retrieved April 1, 2019 from <https://www.ggalanti.org/the-4cs-of-culture/>.



There is a lot of work to be done, but education is where it begins.

The terms, “cultural sensitivity,” “cultural competence,” and “cultural compassion,” have been recent hot topics, especially in healthcare. There’s something to be said for measurable results, but there’s also something to be said for simply doing the right thing.

Our world is not homogenous, and when someone needs care — no matter who they are or what their background is — healthcare providers must learn to overcome cultural barriers to help patients feel safe, understand their expectations and to provide the best care possible. There is a lot of work to be done, but education is where it begins. <

For more details on the impact of cultural sensitivity on the business of healthcare, visit: <https://info.nhanow.com/learning-leading-blog/the-business-case-for-cultural-sensitivity>.

Putting it into practice:

As you consider how to implement changes to improve cultural sensitivity in the delivery of care at your institution, it is important to establish a baseline measurement. Consider asking your patients to rate your organization using the following questions in your patient satisfaction questionnaire:

- Do you trust your care team?
- Do you believe your clinicians respect you and your personal health decisions?
- Can your clinicians understand and empathize with your feelings?
- Do you feel that your care team is flexible?



OVERCOMING OBSTACLES AND DETERMINED TO THRIVE

LeAnn Thorne CERTIFIED CLINICAL MEDICAL ASSISTANT

After working as a medical assistant for nearly 30 years, LeAnn Thorne, CCMA, sought career advancement by earning industry credentials — and she didn't let a brain tumor diagnosis stop her.

Since she was a child, Thorne knew she wanted to be in the medical field because she loved helping and caring for others. Growing up in a small town in Indiana, she says there weren't a lot of educational opportunities in her area, and as a young mother she chose a career as an emergency medical technician (EMT).

Finding the pay to be lacking, and with a move to Indianapolis under her belt, Thorne began working at a bakery to make ends meet, and in the process started to research other career options within the healthcare field — leading her to medical assisting.

"That's when I decided to apply to a medical assistant program," she says. Thorne, now a mother to three grown children and grandmother to eight, credits the program with

helping her achieve her career goals of working in healthcare: "It has fulfilled my desire to be a caregiver and gave me the opportunity to support my family. There's nothing I wanted more than to show my kids how to work hard to achieve goals. When I graduated top of my class of my MA program, my family was so proud of me. My kids were at my graduation cheering me on!"

Overcoming obstacles

Thorne's accomplishments are all the more noteworthy because she earned her national certification despite receiving a brain tumor diagnosis in 2006. Her physician warned her that she could face significant disabilities after surgery, however, she had a miraculous recovery.

The tumor grew back years later, requiring an additional surgery and radiation, and has since recurred, causing severe headaches. Through her own health battles, Thorne kept fighting and passed her certified clinical medical assistant (CCMA) exam with flying colors.

"When beginning to study for my certification exam, I was concerned because of my past brain tumors and procedures, and because it was so long ago when I completed my [education] program," says Thorne, "It was more difficult for me to study than it was 27 years ago during my program. I wasn't sure what I had retained from back then. Plus, I wasn't sure how much my surgery and radiation impacted my cognitive abilities."

"I HAD SOME FAIRLY SIGNIFICANT OBSTACLES TO OVERCOME AND I AM SO THANKFUL NOW THAT I'VE EARNED MY CERTIFICATION AND THAT IT'S EASY TO MAINTAIN. CERTIFICATION HELPED ME TO REFRESH SKILLS I HADN'T USED IN A LONG TIME. IF I CAN DO IT, OTHERS CAN DO IT TOO."

With decades of experience working as a medical assistant, Thorne knew the fundamentals that the exam would cover, but was apprehensive about testing.

She utilized a study resource and practice tests to help her prepare. She also studied with others working toward their certification, quizzing one another on the material.

Climbing the MA career ladder

Thorne earned her CCMA as part of Indiana University Health's career laddering program, which allowed her to study and learn on the job.

"The career laddering program outlines specific goals and benchmarks that you have to reach to climb to the next rung," she says.

"To advance beyond MA1, I needed to be part of the career laddering program...MA2 requires getting certified among many other responsibilities. It also requires being recommended by your supervisor...and comes with a pay increase," Thorne says. "After the certification program, there are even more opportunities available, including working your way up to a team leader role."

As for anyone considering certification, Thorne says, "Just do it. Do it for you and your career."

She adds, "I had some fairly significant obstacles to overcome and I am so thankful now that I've earned my certification and that it's easy to maintain. Certification helped me to refresh skills I hadn't used in a long time. If I can do it, others can do it too."

Best of all, by earning her credentials, Thorne gets to continue doing what she loves most — working with patients. "I love my job and I think my patients can feel that. I think it makes a difference." <

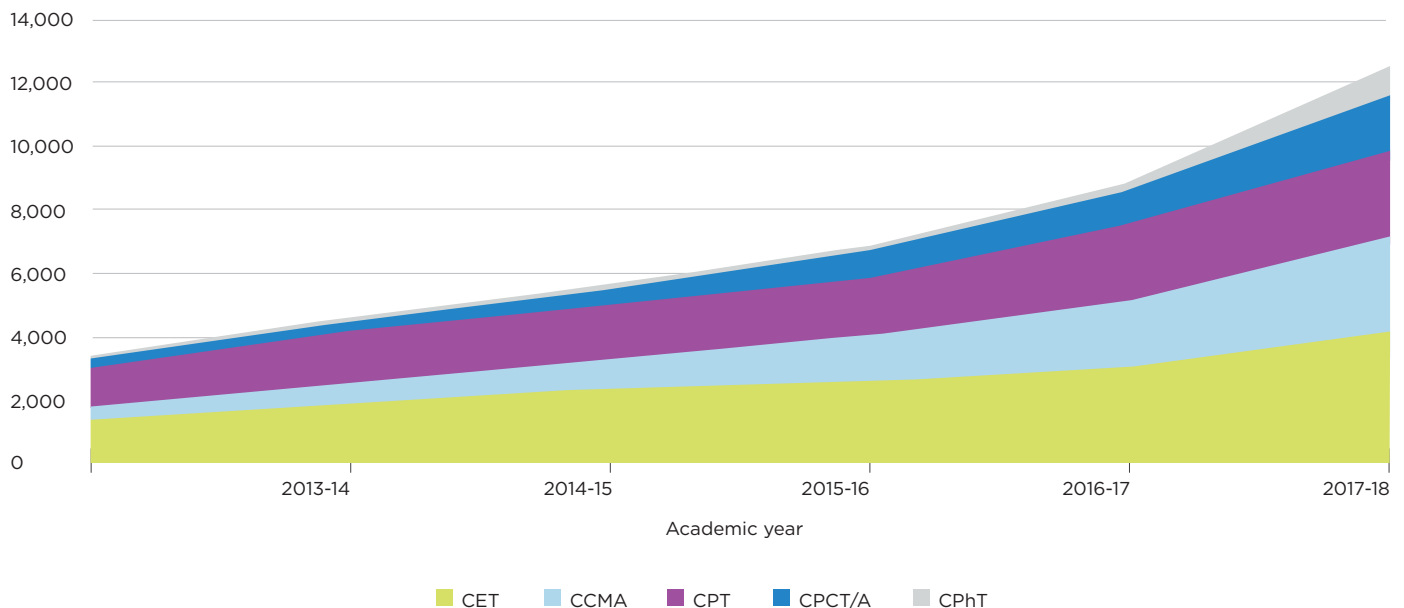


A Young Solution for an Aging Population

How High School Students are Entering Healthcare Careers Earlier and More Prepared

Contributor: Janet Rapuano, Ph.D.

Clinical health certifications awarded to CTE program graduates by NHA

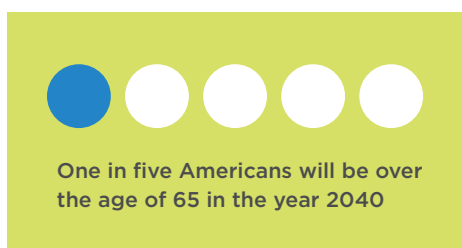


CTE in the community

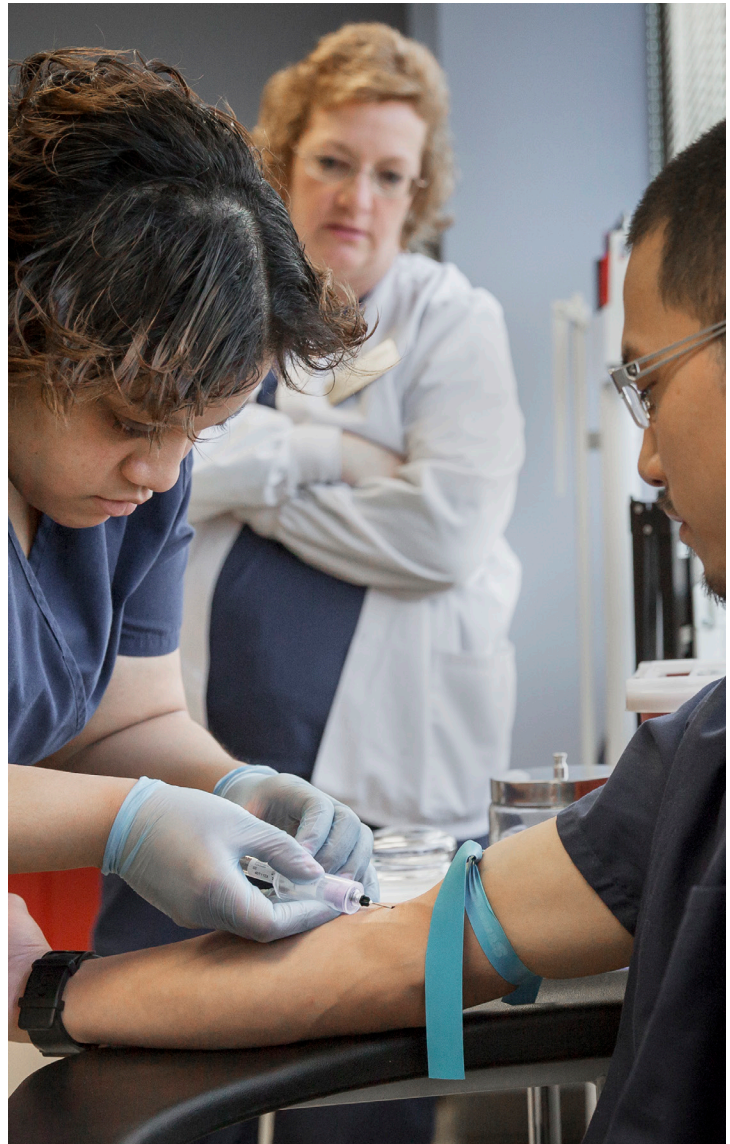
Across the United States, communities watch with pride as high school graduates walk across the stage and then into career opportunities. Many of these career and technical education (CTE) graduates earned not only their high school diplomas, but also received hands-on experience and education toward a specific career path. Often, students who choose a health sciences track within their CTE program can graduate with one or more allied health credential, providing them with a direct path to employment. These students and their communities are reaping the benefits of their achievements.

Filling in-demand jobs in healthcare

The aging population in the U.S. is increasing the demand for healthcare workers; by 2040, projections show one in five Americans will be over the age of 65.¹ The impact of this is twofold: one, a large number of healthcare professionals will be retiring, creating many open jobs, and two, the aging population will need more healthcare services, which will require many more healthcare professionals.



“The world is constantly changing, but careers in the health fields and many others are ever-present,” explains Janet Rapuano, Ph.D., career consultant at Adams County Tech Prep, which serves students from five high schools in Adams County, Pennsylvania. “We need to train the students to fill the skills gaps coming up in their future as many people retire.”



“The world is constantly changing, but careers in the health fields and many other industries are ever-present.”

¹ Gabriel, B. (2018). By 2040, One in Five Americans Will Be Over Age 65. AARP. Retrieved online on April 3, 2019 at <https://www.aarp.org/politics-society/history/info-2018/older-population-increase-new-report.html>.

Certified allied health professionals are among the most in-demand, according to research from ExcelinEd and Burning Glass Technologies. Medical assistants, pharmacy technicians, and EKG technicians are all 100% undersupplied.²

Providing students with the knowledge and skillsets to take on jobs in healthcare continues to be a priority for educators. High school CTE program leaders see value in providing students with pathways to certification. In addition to entering the workforce immediately after graduation, students can use certification to become more competitive candidates for colleges and universities. Earning a certification also gives college entrants an opportunity to work in high-demand jobs while earning their degrees, and many times, employers will provide tuition assistance.

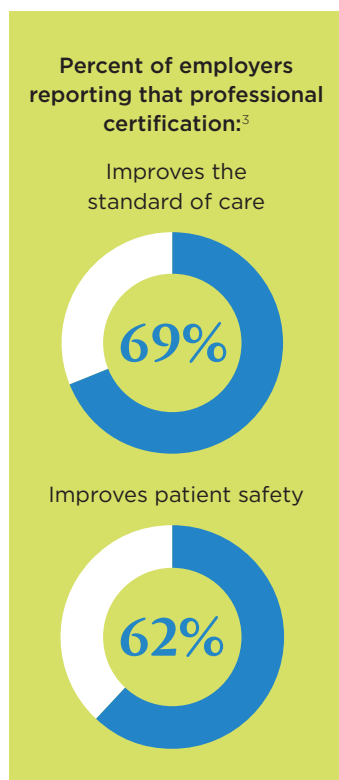
Since 2013, NHA has certified more than 68,000 learners in CTE programs. High school students perform well, with a pass rate around 72% across all the professional certification exams. Clinical health certifications through high school CTE programs continue to be on the rise (see chart on p.28).

Providing quality care to communities

Many do not realize that high school students can begin a career in healthcare, providing high-quality care

to patients immediately after graduating. When high schools give students the opportunity to earn certifications, they help students prove that they can perform duties required for various allied health jobs. Certification indicates that a learner has met a nationally-recognized measure of competency.

Even in states where regulations do not require certification, many employers emphasize its importance. In a recent survey, 69% of employers reported that professional certification improves the standard of care, and 62% of employers said that professional certification improves patient safety.³



When students enroll in CTE programs with the intention of working in a healthcare career, they learn that they can truly make an impact. As they progress through their programs, their confidence grows because they have gained the skills and abilities to help patients. Knowing this motivates students and helps them stay focused through difficult coursework and in preparing for certification exams.

“Students understand the impact they can make on patients,” says Rapuano. “They take it seriously.”

The growth rate for allied health occupations outpaces the average rate for all occupations in the United States by more than two times.³

Review the access™ 2019 Industry Outlook (see insert to the right) for a look at projected growth among allied health professions by state.

As CTE health science programs continue to grow and certify more students, patients and healthcare institutions will continue to benefit from work-ready, newly certified allied health professionals. In communities where the demand for qualified clinicians is especially high, CTE programs offer a solution, bringing credentialed professionals to their local workforce earlier and more frequently. <

² Suffren, Q., & O’Kane L. (2019). The ROI of Industry-Recognized Credentials. Presentation, SXSWedu March 2019.

³ National Healthcareer Association. (2019). The 2019 Industry Outlook of Allied Health Professions.



5 Trends **Transforming** **the Continuing** **Education** **Landscape**

*Contributors: Robert L. Joyner, Jr., Ph.D.
Marilyn Wideman, DNP*

Can you imagine if healthcare professionals didn't continue to educate themselves throughout their careers? Tenured individuals would be using dated, and potentially dangerous, methods. Just search the internet for "bizarre medical treatments in history," and prepare to be shocked at what we once thought were legitimate health practices.

There's no question that healthcare is a dynamic field that requires professionals to stay up-to-date with the latest skills, research and technologies available. Continuing education (CE) provides opportunities for personal and professional growth, which helps make the best possible healthcare services available across the U.S. and world. Employers often view CE as a main resource to further develop valued skills in their healthcare professionals.

While continuing education evolves (and we'll explore where it's headed in this article), its role in serving as a foundational educational resource will remain firmly in place.

"Continuing education for healthcare professionals is part of a lifelong learning strategy essential to maintaining a practitioner's expertise," says Robert L. Joyner, Jr., Ph.D., director of the School of Health Sciences at Salisbury University in Salisbury, Maryland. "Everyone seeking

out healthcare should have confidence that their provider is engaged with the job, their profession, and has current knowledge of the best interventions and therapies."

Traditionally, professionals attend in-person meetings, courses and events to earn CE credits — a mode of education that's likely to continue. But as the healthcare field progresses, so too will the future of CE for healthcare professionals. Let's take a look at some advancements to expect.



1

Online solutions for CE likely to expand in the next five years

Dr. Joyner believes professional meetings will continue to serve the vast majority of CE needs in the foreseeable future, describing such personal interactions as essential for gaining knowledge. However, he also acknowledges that online solutions are likely to grow, providing a more accessible source of continued learning for any credentialed or licensed healthcare professional.

“The expense of attending meetings can be extensive and unrealistic for many types of healthcare providers,” he says. “Increasingly, practitioners are turning to online solutions for their continuing education needs, and I believe that the market will continue to expand as we use technology to connect all parts of our lives, both professionally and personally.”

2

The importance of engaged versus passive learning

No matter what role or specialty, most adults learn best when they’re engaged and able to interact with the material. Engaged learning, versus passive learning, is viewed as a best continuing education practice, according to Marilyn Wideman, DNP, academic dean and vice president of the School of Nursing at Purdue University Global.

“Use of experiential and engaged learning can build skills and confidence as well as give the learner the opportunity to apply new knowledge, to learn from their peers, and build greater insights into their own knowledge level and skill sets,” Wideman says.

One example is the use of simulation, which is interactive, builds skills and knowledge, and provides an opportunity for learners to apply what they’ve learned. It can also be used individually or for teams, who may get a chance to participate in team-based case studies.

See “Simulation: Changing the Game of Healthcare Training” on page 38 for an in-depth look at simulation training in healthcare.

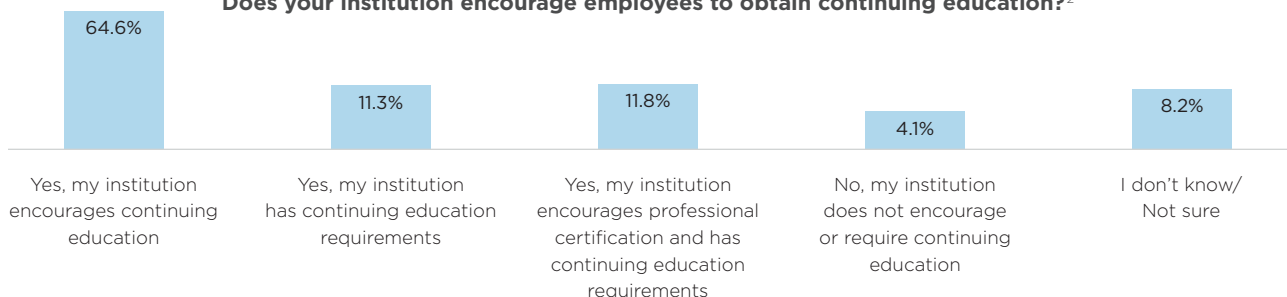
3

A move toward interprofessional continuing education

CE for healthcare professionals has long been discipline-specific, but today’s healthcare professionals have increasing demands that require a broader knowledge base beyond their specialties. We’ve seen this trend in stacking allied health credentials, and now, an increasing number of healthcare professionals are seeking interprofessional continuing education, allowing them to collaborate with providers from outside of their profession or across specialties.

“The rationale for interprofessional learning includes improving how healthcare teams work together and communicate with each other, enhancing interprofessional collaboration, and ultimately improving patient care outcomes,” explains Dr. Wideman.

Does your institution encourage employees to obtain continuing education?²



4

Using personalization in curriculum and training

Personalized experiences are everywhere, and now you can even find them in your CE curriculum.

The federal report, *Continuing Education, Professional Development and Lifelong Learning for the 21st Century Health Care Workforce*, recommends not only inter-professional learning activities and flexible learning modalities, but also learner-driven curricula, providing more personalized CE experiences.¹

“There is still work to be done in the CE world to accomplish impactful personalized CE learning,” Wideman notes, but says on-demand online learning options may help propel CE to meet the individual learner’s needs. “With on-demand [learning], the learner could be choosing to learn what they want to know versus just what they need to know.”

5

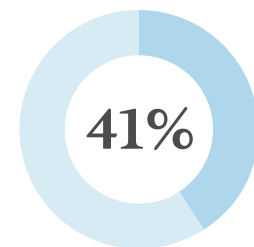
Tactics to ensure continuing education actually fills skill and knowledge gaps

Continuing education is often in lieu of other training methods or mentorships and coaching to help healthcare professionals develop skills and keep up with trends. This reliance is often cost-driven, according to Dr. Joyner. He believes CE alone can’t be used for skill development — but when combined with a comprehensive skill development program that includes education and time for practice, discussion, and remediation, it can be quite successful.

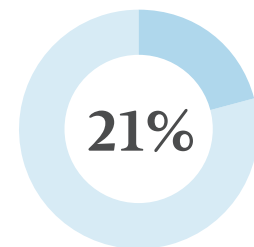
Wideman similarly believes CE, in combination with other training, will remain a foundation for the continued development of healthcare professionals after graduation and licensure. “The use of CE, mentoring, and different types of on-the-job training can complement each other and are all important with the dominant modality based on the setting and learning needs.” <

How do you, personally, receive your continuing education?²

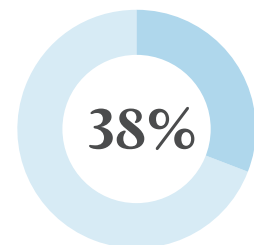
I am responsible for finding my own continuing education resources



My company provides continuing education for the employees



It is a combination of the two; I find continuing education resources as well as my company provides some to me



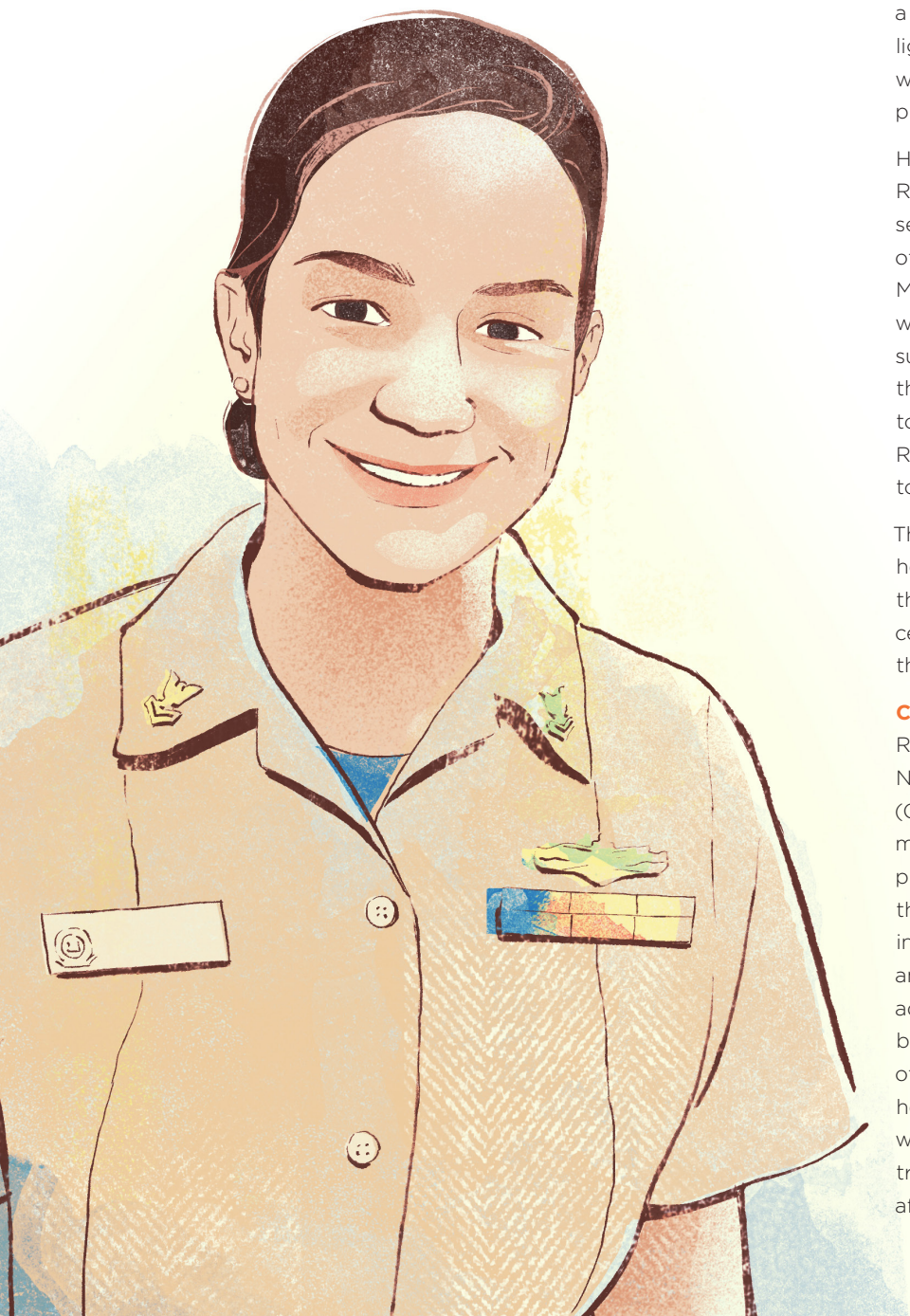
¹ Continuing Education, Professional Development and Lifelong Learning for the 21st Century Health Care Workforce. (2011). Retrieved from <https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hrsa/advisory-committees/community-based-linkages/reports/eleventh-2011.pdf>.

² National Healthcareer Association. (2018). 2018 Industry Outlook.

BRINGING 'COOL' OPPORTUNITIES TO SAILORS

HM2(IW) Andora N. Remsing

EXAM PROCTOR



After completing intensive training, a hospital corpsman takes a pledge that says they will hold the care of the sick and injured to be a privilege and a sacred trust. This pledge isn't taken lightly, and becomes ingrained in those who dedicate their military career to providing medical care to those in need.

Hospital Corpsman Second Class Andora Remsing knows this pledge well. She serves as the assistant leading petty officer of the Pediatrics Clinic at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth (NMCP) where she leads and manages 29 sailors, supporting 89 providers, who ensure the delivery of timely and quality care to more than 15,500 patients. Every day, Remsing witnesses sailors' dedication to their patients and their careers.

This is why she was determined to help them find opportunities to grow their careers by earning industry certifications that align with the work they pledge to do each and every day.

COOL opportunities

Remsing first contacted the Department of Navy Credentialing Opportunities Online (COOL) program to assist her junior corpsmen in taking advantage of the benefits this program offers. One of the main benefits that the COOL program provides is funding resources to pay for credential exams and maintenance fees. The Navy strongly advocates for the value of certification because it increases the professionalism of corpsmen. Earning credentials can help sailors work toward a promotion while serving. Credentials also help sailors transition into civilian healthcare roles after completing their military service.

"I was trying to help my junior corpsmen find out how to get nationally certified as medical assistants," explains Remsing.

"I found that not only can corpsmen take the medical assistant certification exam, but they may be qualified, based on their training, to take up to a total of six different national certification exams."

Bringing certification on base

After learning more about the certification process, Remsing was convinced that she needed to bring certification to NMCP. She worked with National Healthcareer Association (NHA) to make NMCP an official site where corpsmen could take certification exams.

EARNING CREDENTIALS CAN HELP SAILORS WORK TOWARD A PROMOTION WHILE SERVING. CREDENTIALS ALSO HELP SAILORS TRANSITION INTO CIVILIAN HEALTHCARE ROLES AFTER COMPLETING THEIR MILITARY SERVICE.

"While corpsmen are in the Navy, national certifications add to their confidence and knowledge," she says. "It also puts them one step ahead for future success by preparing them for the civilian world. Corpsmen who are nationally certified can start a [civilian] career as soon as they transition out of the Navy."

Since she began proctoring at NMCP in December 2018, 39 corpsmen have taken and

passed national certification exams through NHA. Still, she says, many corpsmen do not know that their training qualifies them to earn a certification.

"One of the biggest challenges is the confidence of corpsmen," Remsing explains. These service members complete extensive training and perform their jobs at a high level. However, they don't always believe that they are capable of successfully completing the exams.

In the future, Remsing hopes to see a domino effect: as more corpsmen take and pass national certification exams, it will increase awareness of certification and boost the confidence of fellow corpsmen.

"I see positive changes in the attitudes of corpsmen who take the NHA certification exams and pass. It is a big accomplishment and something to be very proud of!"

For now, Remsing remains committed to spreading the word and helping more corpsmen earn nationally-recognized credentials to grow their career during and after serving in the Navy. <

The Hospital Corpsman's Pledge

I SOLEMNLY PLEDGE MYSELF BEFORE GOD AND THESE WITNESSES TO PRACTICE FAITHFULLY ALL OF MY DUTIES AS A MEMBER OF THE HOSPITAL CORPS.

I HOLD THE CARE OF THE SICK AND INJURED TO BE A PRIVILEGE AND A SACRED TRUST AND WILL ASSIST THE MEDICAL DEPARTMENT OFFICER WITH LOYALTY AND HONESTY.

I WILL NOT KNOWINGLY PERMIT HARM TO COME TO ANY PATIENT.

I WILL NOT PARTAKE OF NOR ADMINISTER ANY UNAUTHORIZED MEDICATION.

I WILL HOLD ALL PERSONAL MATTERS PERTAINING TO THE PRIVATE LIVES OF PATIENTS IN STRICT CONFIDENCE.

I DEDICATE MY HEART, MIND, AND STRENGTH TO THE WORK BEFORE ME.

I SHALL DO ALL WITHIN MY POWER TO SHOW IN MYSELF AN EXAMPLE OF ALL THAT IS HONORABLE AND GOOD THROUGHOUT MY NAVAL CAREER.

Simulation: Changing the Game of Healthcare Training

*Contributors: Glenn Albright, Ph.D.
Ron Goldman*

Gaming has come a long way since the days of Atari. What was once viewed as simply a leisure activity has evolved to be so much more. Video gaming technology is now being used in a previously unexpected way: medical training.

Instead of defeating villains or collecting gold coins, students are using gaming technology to learn, practice, and gain confidence to help real people facing medical and mental health issues.

Kognito, an Ascend Learning health simulation company, is at the forefront of applying

simulation technology in training. Kognito has helped organizations like National Healthcareer Association (NHA) give healthcare students and professionals access to highly interactive and individualized training from virtually anywhere, using their computers or mobile devices.



Some concepts can be learned from textbooks, but learning to master the art of conversation is best accomplished through practice.



Virtual patients are programmed to act and respond just like real patients.

To see an example of this simulation training, visit the online article at <https://info.nhanow.com/learning-leading-blog/simulation>

How simulation is being used in healthcare training

Kognito's virtual humans portray patients who present with behavioral health challenges such as alcohol use, opioid addiction, and suicidality. The virtual patients are programmed to act and respond just like real patients. The technology allows users to assume the role of a virtual health professional and to engage in role-playing conversations with the patient. Users receive tailored feedback immediately as they select or deselect dialogue choices, with the goal of using conversation tactics like motivational interviewing (MI) that will best help the patient. This provides training in a low-risk environment, which allows users to experiment and feel comfortable before applying these skills in real life.

In the gaming sense, dialogue is the "weapon." Learning effective conversation tactics for different situations leads to a "win" — a win that when translated in the real world, could help improve or even save lives. These simulated conversations with emotionally responsive virtual patients have tremendous success, especially when compared to traditional textbook learning or even to live role-playing with peers or instructors.

"It's amazing, and not surprising, that people find it easier to talk to virtual humans," says Dr. Glenn Albright, Kognito

co-founder and director of research. "[People] don't get as anxious as when they role play face-to-face with instructors or peers. Virtual humans are easier to talk to; you feel less threatened and you feel like you're not going to be judged, so you are more yourself."

Some concepts can be learned from textbooks, but mastering the art of conversation is best accomplished through practice. As healthcare institutions focus more on patient-provider relationships, simulation training can be a game-changing tool to help train current and future healthcare professionals.

"People learn best through practice. None of us learned how to ride a bike from a movie. We all had to get on a bike," says Ron Goldman, Kognito co-founder and chief executive officer. "Even though we can all agree that's the best way of learning — to learn by doing — the training industry is still dominated by non-interactive, non-simulation training."

Antoinette Schoenthaler, Ed.D., FAACH, a professor at NYU School of Medicine, echoes Goldman's statement that learning through repeated practice is more effective than traditional methods. "I've been doing MI and communication skills training for a really long time, and what we've learned is that a one-time, workshop-based opportunity where there's no real interaction with patients is not effective,"

she says. "What I find fascinating from the Kognito model is that this gives [students] opportunities to repeatedly practice effective communication skills and learn from their mistakes in a safe environment."¹

Simulation training: the way toward patient-centered care?

Patient-centered care is becoming increasingly important across all healthcare venues. According to Goldman, the days of lecturing patients are over. Collaboration with and active participation from patients, their families, and the healthcare team are essential to providing exceptional care. As healthcare organizations work toward a team-based or patient-centered care model, simulation training can be a powerful tool.

Goldman hopes that the rapid adoption of simulation training in sectors like healthcare is the start of a transition to a time when interactivity plays a more primary role in education. Simulation training has the potential to make a huge difference in healthcare professionals' conversation skills and confidence — keys toward more successful patient-centered care. When healthcare workers can more effectively communicate and collaborate with patients, strides can be made to improve their social, emotional and physical well-being.



Can a virtual patient cause real behavior change?

An astounding 65 million Americans will experience a mental health or substance use disorder in their lifetime. This raises their risk of disease and mortality, and increases healthcare costs.²

Fortunately, there are clinical approaches to help healthcare professionals screen more patients for substance use or mental health disorders, which can lead to early detection and lifesaving, timely interventions. According to a survey of nearly 700 healthcare professionals:

57% don't feel adequately prepared to screen patients, or to provide their patients with information about the impact of substance use and mental health disorders;³

64% don't feel adequately prepared to use MI techniques to enhance their patients' motivation to change their behaviors or to seek help;³

62% don't feel adequately prepared to collaborate with their patients to create an action plan.³

It's clear that there's a lot to gain from more effective screening and an opportunity for healthcare professionals to improve their conversation and MI skills to better serve patients.

Data from providers who have completed Kognito simulations show statistically significant improvement in provider skills.

In the months following use of simulation, health professionals reported a 20% average increase in the number of patients they screened, engaged in brief intervention and referred to follow-up care.⁴ In addition, it's also shown to:

Be cost effective

Studies have shown that investing in Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) training for care teams can result in healthcare cost savings ranging from \$3.91 to \$5.60 for each dollar spent on implementation.⁵

Save time

Goldman says that one of the key ways Kognito measures ROI is a reduction in not only cost, but time, compared to other training modalities such as workshops.

Deliver and scale effective training

Because simulation is easily accessible online, students are able to complete training in their own time, without needing an instructor, manager or peer.

“People learn best through practice. None of us learned how to ride a bike from a movie. We all had to get on a bike.”

“I was cynical initially about the role that this kind of technology could play,” says Adina Kalet, MD, MPH, professor of medicine and surgery at NYU School of Medicine. “I think it has a very, very important role in helping us scale our interventions with patients since what we actually do requires four hours of direct interaction...I think most people don't have that kind of time or resources and this is a way of scaling up the practice parts of what we know works to help people get empowered.”⁶

These results are promising, and suggest a future where simulation plays a greater role in training and in continuing education.

Looking forward: what to expect in the future of simulation training

Simulation training may seem like something from the future, but it's here now, quickly being adopted across healthcare because of its success. Technology continues to evolve at a rapid pace... so what does the future of simulation training look like?

Goldman anticipates better integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in simulation, saying that the future of virtual patients will be even

more life-like and will have the capability to understand subtle details, such as the intonation of your voice:

“AI and machine learning are going to allow all of us in this industry to increase the value that we can derive from simulation being able to better mimic real life,” Goldman predicts.

In addition to better technology, there's also a likelihood for larger reach. Dr. Albright is excited about the future applications of simulation training as it expands into more areas. “Once you experience this technology, you can think about how it can be applied to help so many people,” he says.

“There are so many important areas where we can make a difference in peoples' lives.” Dr. Albright noted examples such as caretakers dealing with the aging population, or with parents of children with autism.

As technology continues to advance and adoption spreads, the possibilities are limitless. Simulation training has the potential to help transform the way we learn and lead to better outcomes for healthcare educators, healthcare providers and ultimately, for the patients they serve.

In this game, everyone wins. <

For more information about Kognito's simulation training, visit [Kognito.com](https://kognito.com).

¹ Kognito. (2019, January 15). Antoinette Schoenthaler, EdD, FAACH - Center for Healthful Behavior Change - NYU School of Medicine [video file]. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/294u3Q0EPYw>.

² Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2018). Key substance use and mental health indicators in the United States: Results from the 2017 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (HHS Publication No. SMA 18-5068, NSDUH Series H-53). Rockville, MD: Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/>.

³ Finnell, DS., Albright, G. (2019). Are Healthcare Professionals Ready to Address Patients' Substance Use and Mental Health Disorders?. Retrieved from <https://go.kognito.com/rs/143-HCJ-270/images/Are-Healthcare-Professionals-Ready-to-Address-Substance-Use-Mental-Health.pdf>.

⁴ “Kognito. (2018, November 29) Kognito's Simulations on Conducting Mental Health and Substance Use Screening and Brief Intervention [video file]. retrieved from <https://youtu.be/qo9sXUJZV40>.

⁵ Koetting, C. Freed, P. (2016, August 1). Educating Undergraduate Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing Students in Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) Using an Online, Interactive Simulation. Archives of Psychiatric Nursing, Volume 31, Issue 3, 241-247. Retrieved from [https://www.psychiatricnursing.org/article/S0883-9417\(16\)30150-9/abstract](https://www.psychiatricnursing.org/article/S0883-9417(16)30150-9/abstract).

⁶ Kognito. (2019, January 15). Adina Kalet, MD, MPH of NYU School of Medicine [video file]. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/CGh6qwdUI3A>.

Cultivating a Personal Brand

Through improving interpersonal skills, healthcare professionals can learn to shape others' impressions, helping to build trust among both employers and patients.

Contributors: Kim Doerflinger, Antrea Dowd, Elizabeth Thompson, Julie Walters and Davene Yankle, MS-HSM, BSN, CCRN

To healthcare professionals, it comes as no secret that one of the cornerstones of patient care is connection. In order to connect, clinicians must be able to communicate, verbally and nonverbally, in a way that uniquely recognizes each patient as an individual. Communication is key in the delivery of care and can have a tremendous impact on patient outcomes. Interpersonal skills, such as showing empathy, listening and taking time to explain recommendations, influence the likelihood for a patient to follow through on care plans and

even the potential to successfully manage a chronic condition.

Interpersonal skills, sometimes referred to as “soft skills,” also play a factor in creating a strong “brand” in the eyes of the patient — it is a reflection of the health professional, the team and the organization. A brand is the impression people form based on experiences they have with you. In healthcare, brand is largely dependent on the strength of the healthcare worker’s interpersonal skills.

personal branding defined:

Although similar to a reputation, which everyone has whether they like it or not, a personal brand is something more consciously created. The journal, *Frontiers in Psychology*, defines the distinction between brand and branding.

personal brand

[pur-suh-nl brand] • adjective

A set of characteristics of an individual (attributes, values, beliefs, etc.) rendered into a differentiated narrative and imagery with the intent of establishing a competitive advantage in the minds of the target audience.

personal branding

[pur-suh-nl brand-ing] • verb

A strategic process of creating, positioning, and maintaining a positive impression of oneself, based on a unique combination of individual characteristics, which signal a certain promise to the target audience through a differentiated narrative and imagery.

By strengthening interpersonal skills, you can influence your personal brand and the brand of the healthcare team.

“Interpersonal skills play a very important role in personal branding,” says Antrea Dowd, corporate director of education at Brookline College. “The ability of the healthcare professional to communicate and relate to the patient will impact the patient’s adherence to the treatment plan.”

Developing your brand becomes the core of your reputation, image and persona not only during a job interview, but also throughout your career. A strong personal brand can support your aspirations as well as the success of any organization for which you work.

Further, by honing certain soft skills, a positive bedside manner, and emotional intelligence, you can become an indispensable part of the healthcare community. When patients view you favorably, believing that you are a skilled healthcare professional based on their experiences with you, your personal brand continues to grow as a trusted source for care.

Using your personal brand to elevate your healthcare career

Intentionally focusing on building your personal brand requires you to reflect on how others may perceive you:

- Do you give off calming and comforting feelings?
- Are you a problem solver with impeccable timing?
- Do you command respect?

If you think others’ view you differently than how you want to be perceived, it might be time to reinvest in your development. The process of personal branding can be used to make positive change to help you achieve your career goals, life goals and much more.

As a healthcare professional, your personal brand needs to be dynamic, reflecting personal and organizational values. If your personal brand

doesn’t fit with the culture of a certain hospital, medical office or laboratory, for instance, you will likely have a hard time advancing there.

In healthcare, your personal brand is one way to set yourself apart from the crowd and show that you are a valuable asset to an organization.

“It sums up the overall emotional impression of an individual’s fit within the organization or industry,” says Julie Walters, director of academic operations, ground campuses at The College of Health Care Professions.

“Technical skills, critical thinking skills, bedside manner, focus on quality, assertiveness and interpersonal skills (professional and social environments), are all part of what makes up the personal brand of a healthcare worker,” she adds.

“In the healthcare field, your personal brand not only helps you develop your professional reputation, but also articulates the value you bring to the people you serve, i.e., the patients,” says Davene Yankle, MS-HSM, BSN, CCRN of OhioHealth.

Putting it into practice:

In the access™ 2019 Industry Outlook (see insert between p 30-31), employers rated the following as the top communication skills that newly certified allied health professionals need to focus on:

- **Active listening**
- **Non-verbal communication**
- **Empathy and sensitivity**
- **Cultural competence**
- **Tone, pitch, pacing and volume of communication**
- **Written communication**
- **Motivational interviewing**

Consider sharing this article with your new hires for professional development, or with students working toward certification to help them better prepare for the workforce.

brand brings value

“A healthcare professional’s brand is very important,” says Dowd. “A patient will judge the medical facility based on the appearance and behavior of the professional. Healthcare professionals must understand that once they put on the uniform, there is a certain expectation for the level of professionalism.”

In addition to your unique skillset and story, your appearance, behavior and language also encompass your personal brand. Dowd points out the importance of being mindful of your online presence as well.

Interpersonal skills shape an effective personal brand

When preparing to enter the workforce, it’s important to consider what both patients and employers need and expect. “Most employers agree that soft skills are just as important as technical skills,” Walters says. “In healthcare, soft skills are critical to success because you are engaged with the personal aspects of an individual’s health. Compassion and listening skills are very important.”

Kim Doerflinger, allied health program director at Southeastern Institute–Charlotte, agrees, adding, “There are so many factors that can be incorporated in an individual’s personal brand, such as professionalism, work ethic, competencies, credibility and confidence... [but] interpersonal skills are number one...An individual’s ability to effectively communicate, actively listen, work

in a team, show empathy and resolve conflict are all key areas to build upon to develop their personal brand to the professional level the healthcare industry needs in order to provide quality customer service to patients.”

Your brand is essentially the organization’s brand

In practice, allied health professionals are often the first employees that a patient connects to the larger organization and, as such, their personal brand impacts that of the organization. As noted by Elizabeth Thompson, service line administrator with IU Health, Southern Indiana Physicians: “How [healthcare professionals] are perceived by patients and other customers is ultimately how the organization they work for is perceived. One individual’s interaction with a customer will impact an opinion, positive or negative. They essentially ARE the brand of the organization.”

How employers and schools are teaching and measuring interpersonal skills

When displaying your personal brand, your motivations, values and character should all shine through. In addition to your technical skills, your interpersonal skills, appearance, online presence, goals and passions all play an important role. However, the interpersonal skills that are a crucial part of this package can be difficult to assess objectively.

Some institutions use assessment software designed to identify soft skills during the interview process. Once hired, companies are helping their healthcare employees build interpersonal skills and develop their brand through targeted continuing education and coaching.

Some of the more innovative schools use a variety of training methods, including standardized patients, or individuals trained to act as a real patient and portray situations healthcare providers may see once in the field. Along with helping them practice clinical skills, standardized patients provide feedback on the learner’s interpersonal skills, including empathy.

Ultimately, interpersonal skills set healthcare professionals apart, and those with the strongest skills are not only the most sought-after by employers, but also the most equipped to deliver the kind of care patients want and need. If your future is in healthcare, this is the time to consider what your personal brand says about you now and what you want it to say about you in the future. <

Interpersonal Communication Skills Self-Assessment

By National Healthcareer Association

Take time to reflect on your skills. Below, you'll find the interpersonal communication skills that employers believe are most valuable. Rate yourself on your performance of these skills from 1 to 5, with 1 being "needs improvement" and 5 being "always excellent."

This worksheet is for your own use, so be honest with yourself. The best way to improve a skill is recognizing that you have room to grow and then taking action. Keep this self-assessment handy so you can return to it over time to reflect on your progress and make new plans for further improvement.

Active listening

Active listening keeps you engaged in your conversation with a patient through the process of listening attentively, paraphrasing and reflecting back on what is said while withholding judgement and advice.

1 2 3 4 5

Empathy and sensitivity

Empathy is emotionally understanding what another person is experiencing. Sensitivity is being highly aware of the attitudes and feelings of others.

1 2 3 4 5

Tone, pitch, pacing and volume of communication

Paraverbal communication, or how we say something through our tone, pitch, pacing and volume, impacts how patients hear the messages you are trying to convey.

1 2 3 4 5

Non-verbal communication - body language

Facial expressions, body posture, gestures, eye movement, touch and other types of body language can have as much impact as the words you say.

1 2 3 4 5

Cultural competence

Being culturally competent means that you understand that each patient draws conclusions based on their own unique experiences, beliefs, values, background and language.

1 2 3 4 5

Written communication

Written communication involves expressing yourself clearly, using language with proper grammar and precision; in healthcare, note taking, editing and summarizing are critical.

1 2 3 4 5

Motivational interviewing (MI)

MI engages patients through collaborative conversation. Instead of making demands of patients, this person-centered approach addresses ambivalence about change.

1 2 3 4 5

Create an Action Plan

After completing your interpersonal skills self-assessment, follow these steps to plan your goals for performance improvement.

STEP #1

Review your self-assessment and write down any skills you rated a 4 or 5.

My top interpersonal skills are:

STEP #2

Look back at your lower scores (1s, 2s and 3s). Write down what you could be doing better. If you're not sure how to make changes, engage a trusted supervisor or mentor.

In the next 6 months, I'll work to improve:

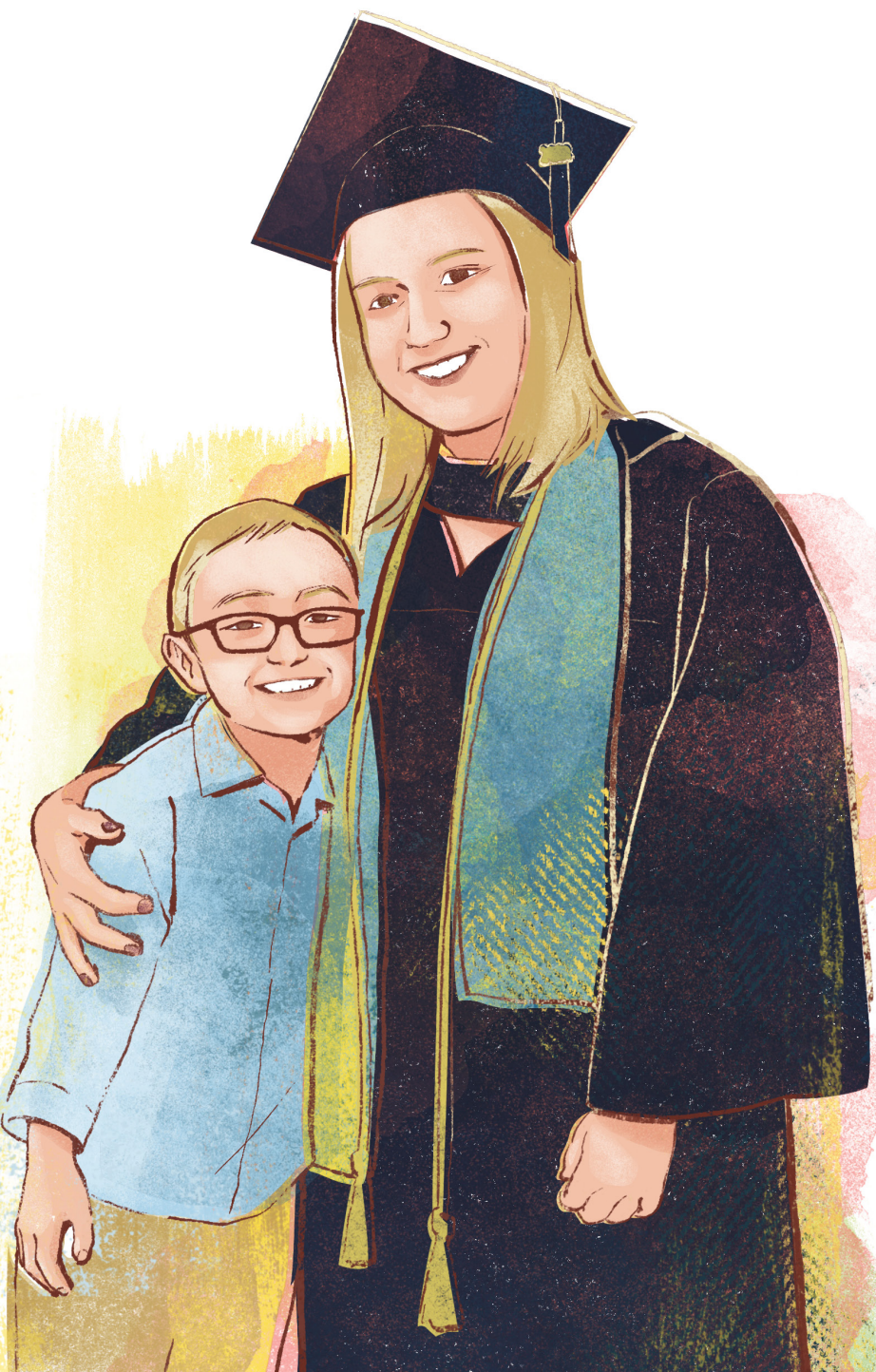
STEP #3

Based on your scores and your personal goals, where do you think you can make the most progress? Decide which skill will be your main focus and write it down.

Within a year, I will focus on improving the following skill the most:

STEPPING INTO UNEXPECTED OPPORTUNITY

Jamie Bornt CERTIFIED PHARMACY TECHNICIAN



Nearly 18 years ago as a teenager, Jamie Bornt began working as a cashier at her local Hannaford grocery store. Over time she earned a promotion to manage the customer service department, where she excelled in meeting the needs of customers. As a star employee, Bornt's talent and demeanor caught the attention of the store's pharmacy manager.

Bornt was in college to become a medical administrative assistant when Brent Conlee, a pharmacist and manager of the pharmacy at Hannaford, approached her with a question: would she consider applying for a pharmacy technician role on the pharmacy team?

"Jamie is so approachable and has a great handle on the customer service aspect. That's why we wanted to have her take on a full-time role in the pharmacy," explains Conlee.

Bornt saw the opportunity and what it would mean for her and her family. In addition to fitting nicely with her studies, the role offered her a full-time, Monday-through-Friday schedule. Bornt took the job, welcoming the challenge that the pharmacy technician role offered. A bonus was that her new schedule would allow her to spend more time with her son. She knew she wouldn't have to miss as many baseball games and other evening and weekend activities.

Advancing into a new career

Once in the pharmacy, Bornt knew it was a good fit. She was able to apply what she was learning on the job to her school work. She also decided, with the support of Conlee, to pursue national certification.

She began studying for NHA’s ExCPT exam to earn her certified pharmacy technician credentials (CPhT). Because she was so new to the pharmacy industry, she ran into some challenges along the way. Throughout her preparation for the exam, Bornt turned to her team for support.

“When Jamie had a challenge in studying, another pharmacist or I would work with her, going through certain types of problems, to coach her and help her gain confidence,” explains Conlee.

Bornt found that in studying for the exam, she was able to learn new pharmacy concepts that she hadn’t yet experienced.

“There are things that come up in the study materials that don’t

come up often while you’re working on the job. Because of the study materials, when they do come up, I feel prepared and confident.”

Hard work and dedication paid off. Bornt passed the ExCPT exam and earned the “CPhT” pharmacy technician credentials.

Taking the next step up

Bornt’s commitment to her work didn’t go unnoticed by the management team at Hannaford. In less than one year after earning her credentials, she was approached for a promotion to be the district trainer.

“Jamie has a great ability to teach and explain things. She’s very patient. This made her a great candidate for the training role,” says Conlee. “She knows how to put things in plain terms so everyone can understand. She’s always upbeat and she’s an excellent employee.”

After taking the promotion, Bornt now serves 11 different Hannaford stores in her district. When stores in her district hire pharmacists or pharmacy technicians, Bornt helps

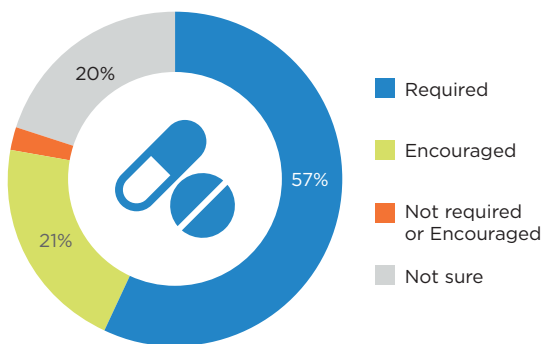
them get up to speed. For newly hired pharmacists, Bornt trains them on Hannaford’s standard practices and technology. For newly trained technicians, she helps with their on-the-job training, and is the final sign-off to ensure technicians are adequately trained for the job. Lastly, Bornt is actively involved in helping her designated stores prepare for and execute the physical inventory process biannually.

“Getting certified within a year is one of the things I am most proud of. I’m also pretty proud that I was able to grow into my role as regional support technician trainer within three years,” Bornt says.

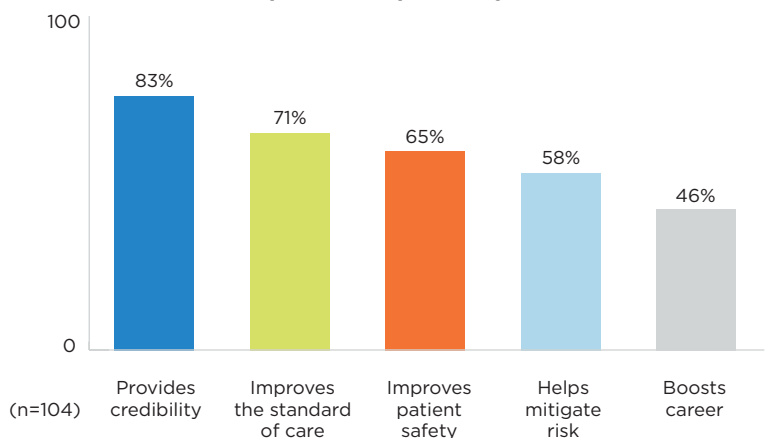
Though she is still relatively new to the world of pharmacy, she’s eager to continue growing her career.

For those who are considering a career as a pharmacy technician, she encourages certification as a starting point: “Stick with it. It’s not as easy as you may want it to be, but it’s definitely worth it.” <

Employer requirements for pharmacy technician certification



Reasons employers view certification as important for pharmacy technicians



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A third-party research firm conducted the research within the 2019 Industry Outlook. The survey was structured to assess the opinions of employers concerning the professional outlook for billing and coding specialists, medical administrative assistants, medical assistants, patient care technicians, pharmacy technicians and phlebotomists. This survey was in market March 6-8, 2019, and evaluated the opinions of 166 employers that were not current NHA customers.

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ISSUE NO. 3 2019

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