

Health care careers remain strong in tough economy

It's no secret that our nation is in a recession the likes of which have not been seen or felt for many years. While certain parts of the country appear to be showing signs of a rebound, Southwest Florida continues to move deeper into a recession. Fueled largely by the real estate collapse and the credit market, unemployment is rapidly approaching double digits and the recovery will be long. But it's not all gloom and doom — in fact, employment opportunities in some fields have been and continue to be very strong. The health-care field offers great potential for immediate and long-term employment and, according to the U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Outlook, jobs as a medical assistant or a surgical technician are expected to grow at an above average rate. Medical assistants work in hospitals, doctor's offices, clinics, treatment



Stephen Calabro

centers and medical laboratories. Their duties vary, but generally involve close contact with patients. Medical assistants are often trained to draw blood, take a patient's vital signs and do a preliminary work-up before the patient sees the doctor. Medical assistants are an important part of the patient care team and work very closely with the professional staff. A surgical technician is on the front line and works in the operating room under the direct supervision of the surgeon and nursing staff. Surgical techs are called upon to prepare the patient for surgery, and to prepare the instrumentation used by the surgeon. Surgical techs do not

perform surgery, but are present during the entire surgical procedure. The work is exciting and very demanding, and attracts highly motivated individuals. If you are frightened by the sight of blood — this is not the career for you!

If working directly with patients is not your cup of tea, consider an administrative position. Medical billing and coding, according to the Department of Labor, is expected to grow at an above-average rate. These individuals insure that medical procedures are properly coded and billed to the insurance companies. The position requires a great deal of

accuracy, as an incorrect code may significantly delay the payment of a claim. Coders work in a professional office setting and generally have little direct patient contact. Good computer skills are a must.

Careers in health care are financially rewarding and usually come with an attractive fringe benefit package. According to The Wall Street Journal: "With the aging population and the likelihood of billions of new federal dollars being directed toward health care, it seems pretty safe to expect the growth (of the health-care field) to continue." In just about all health-care fields,

professional certification is available for those who want to elevate their credentials, prepare for advancement and earn more money.

Dr. Stephen Calabro is the executive vice president of Southwest Florida College, a private, accredited

institution that offers a variety of programs in the health-care field, and has been engaged in career training for 33 years. He can be reached at scalabro@sufc.edu. For more information on the college, call 888-526-7973 or visit the Web site www.sufc.edu.

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