

Called To Lead

The demand for manager and administrators across the healthcare spectrum continues to expand.

Due to an interplay of factors - overall population growth, an aging population, an increase in chronic health conditions, medical advances creating increased demand for services - the healthcare management field is expected to grow a tremendous 20% by 2026, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

This means there's great need for managers and administrators across the healthcare and hospital spectrum, needs that won't be filled by those with clinical experience alone.

Thinking about a career in healthcare management and administration? Here four professionals share how to succeed in this fast-growing field.

BY AMANDA N. WEGNER

establishing its foundational policies and procedures; the department had only been in existence for a year when she took the role. While she's led a variety of projects, one of the most impactful has been the conversion of the department's paper-based mental health records to electronic records.

"This is very important to have in this day and age," she says. "To give an idea how huge the project was, the vendor converted 1.5 million sheets of paper, front and back, to the new electronic health record repository. The project was successful because I work with a great team that invested in the success of the process. It took almost two years to complete and stabilize the project, and our clinical administrative staff now maintains it."

It was the mission of St. Jude as a leading children's hospital pioneering research and treatments for children

with cancer and other life-threatening diseases that brought Stewart Abrams to the organization.

"What drew me was the ability to work in a place where you're working with faculty and employees who want to provide patients with the best care, regardless of their ability to pay," she points out.

Stewart Abrams Helps St. Jude Improve Quality of Life for Young Patients

Chara Stewart Abrams wanted to work in healthcare so she could help "make the world a better place for those with few opportunities and no viable voice."

But she also knew she didn't want to work on the side of healthcare that dealt with blood and broken bones.

The middle ground was working in public health and eventually moving in healthcare administration, where she finds herself today as the administrative director of the department of psychology at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, TN.

"I oversee the operational leadership of the department, including business and research. This allows our researchers and staff to focus on what's important: to cure cancer and create a better quality of life for patients," says Stewart Abrams, who has a master's degree in public health.

With the organization for seven years, Stewart Abrams has played a vital role in building the department's infrastructure and



Chara Stewart Abrams is the administrative director of the department of psychology at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

She also appreciates how St. Jude values its employees who work hard to serve their patients. "St. Jude values its employees and their contributions, regardless of position or role. This is demonstrated by the way leadership listens to employees. Employees here are encouraged to identify areas of improvement and be part of the solution."

For young professionals seeking to work in healthcare administration, Stewart Abrams recommends applying for an administrative fellowship after completing a master's degree.

"This puts you in a healthcare environment and gives you the experiences you need to figure out where it is in the hospital you want to be, such as nursing administration, IT, support services. Whatever role you want to play, fellowships give you the opportunity to learn and experience the field."

"As an early careerist in the healthcare field, it's important to build strong relationships, get to know people and what they do, maybe even find a mentor or sponsor to help you with the trajectory of your career."

She also recommends joining a professional membership organization that serves the industry; Stewart Abrams herself is president of the Memphis chapter of the National Association of Health Services Executives (NAHSE), a professional organization for minority healthcare executives. Another option is the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE).

"These groups provide a network of people in your field in which you can build relationships and participate in professional development opportunities. As an early careerist in the healthcare field, it's important to build strong relationships, get to know people and what they do, maybe even find a mentor or sponsor to help you with the trajectory of your career," she advises.

Find career opportunities with St. Jude at stjude.org/jobs, and connect on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

Hicks Drives Change & Employee Satisfaction at Eskenazi Health

A physical therapist by training, Christia Hicks never thought she'd go from PT to VP, but she has.

Hicks is the vice president of human resources for Eskenazi Health in Indianapolis, IN. She oversees human resource functions and leads the organization's work in employee training and development, volunteer services, wellness, multicultural affairs and occupational health.

"I'm a physical therapist at heart and never thought I would become the VP of HR, but I felt led in this direction and given opportunities to be an executive," says Hicks, who has also completed her MBA.

With Eskenazi Health, formerly Wishard Health Services, for 19 years, Hicks started with the organization as a physical therapist, but was "tapped on the shoulder" time and again to take on roles of greater responsibility. She's served as Eskenazi Health's vice president of human resources for seven years.

One of Hicks' most cherished projects is helping enhance Eskenazi Health's employee engagement scores.

Hicks sponsors a long-term project focused on patient satisfaction, perception of care and employee engagement. When Eskenazi Health first began working with a new vendor on this project three years ago, employee participation was at 49%; the vendor's average of 60%. The most recent survey achieved an 80% participation rate.

"We had a push to try at least get average participation," says Hicks. "We really want to get information from as many employees as we can so we can make effective action plans. The feedback we get turns into actionable results."

Thanks to those results, Eskenazi Health was named one of *Becker's Hospital Review's* 150 Top Places to Work in Healthcare in May 2018 and made *Forbes'* 2018 list of the Best Places to Work for Women.

"From not even having a benchmark, fast-forward three years and we're on a national stage presenting about our results, which is quite an accomplishment," says Hicks.

What originally attracted Hicks to the organization is the same thing that keeps her here: Eskenazi Health's mission and its emphasis on serving a diverse patient population.

"You see people from all walks of life here," she says. "This hospital is over 160 years old, and we've always had a patient-centered healthcare approach, to serve the vulnerable and underserved."

Thanks to her background as a provider, Hicks puts patients at the center of many of her administrative decisions. In fact, she



Christia Hicks is the vice president of human resources for Eskenazi Health.

recommends having a clinical background if you want to pursue an executive healthcare position.

"When you're sitting at the table, facing clinical issues, it's helpful to understand what hypertension is, what diabetes is, to understand the core competencies needed of staff. On our senior leadership team, 60% have a clinical background, which is supplemented by business degrees," Hicks points out.

She also provides this piece of advice for young professionals: figure out what you were meant to do, and do it.

"What is it that gives you energy versus requires energy? That's the direction you should look to," she recommends. "Every day when I wake up, I'm up ready to go, excited about coming to work. Life is too short for it to be mediocre, subpar or unhappy; find your unique gift and do it."

Find career opportunities with Eskenazi Health at eskenazihealth.edu/careers, and connect on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Glassdoor and YouTube.

Harper Opens Doors for Kaiser Permanente Members

Driven by an experience as a child, Corwin Harper was motivated to open the door of healthcare to all people.

Harper is the senior vice president and area manager for the Kaiser Permanente Central Valley area in Northern California, which covers two counties and 367,000 Kaiser Permanente members. In this role he serves as the senior health plan executive, as well as the CEO of two hospitals.

"I ensure all hospital operations run efficiently and smoothly, and take care of members, providing access to care for those who have opted into the Kaiser Permanente health plan," says Harper, who's worked for the company for 22 years.

Right now Harper is working to expand access for members in the region by writing business cases to add capacity, including mental health facilities and medical office buildings.

"These facilities are needed to support and give greater healthcare access to members," he explains.

Access to healthcare is Harper's passion, driven by an experience from his youth. Growing up in the South in the 1960s, many medical offices had removed signs that designated waiting rooms for "whites and coloreds," as was the terminology then, but the practice of separation still held. One day when Harper was having a life-threatening asthma attack, his mother opted to take her son



Corwin Harper is the senior vice president and area manager for the Kaiser Permanente Central Valley area in Northern California.

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HEALTHY GROWTH

Healthcare occupations are projected to add more jobs than any of the other occupational groups, with **18%** growth through 2026 predicted and about **2.4** million new jobs expected to be added to the economy.

More specifically, the outlook for medical and health services managers - also called healthcare executives or healthcare administrators - is very healthy, too, with double-digit **20%** growth also forecast through 2026.

Healthcare administrators and hospital managers plan, direct and coordinate medical and health services. A few examples include nursing home administrators, clinical managers and health information managers. They may manage an entire facility, a specific clinical area or department, or a medical practice for a group of physicians.

All medical and health services managers must adapt to changes in healthcare laws, regulations and technology, too, as each facet continues to evolve at a rapid pace and impact healthcare.

MEDICAL & HEALTH SERVICES MANAGERS

2017 Median Pay:	\$98,350 Per Year
Typical Entry-Level Education:	Bachelor's Degree
Work Experience in a Related Occupation:	Less Than Five Years
On-the-Job Training:	None
Number of Jobs, 2016:	352,200
Job Outlook, 2016-26:	20% (Much Faster Than Average)
Employment Change, 2016-26:	72,100

in through the “whites only” door.

“That saved my life, and since then I’ve been motivated to have one door to serve people,” says Harper. “Seeing how much civil rights impacts healthcare has been a big part of my life. That got me into and keeps me in this line of work...the drive to provide access to all people.”

Harper was initially drawn to Kaiser Permanente after learning about the organization and its integrated care model while working on his master’s degree in healthcare administration.

What has kept him with the Oakland, CA-based organization for more than 20 years is Kaiser Permanente’s mission to provide high-quality healthcare in the communities it serves: “Our interest is not just in our 12.2 million members, but also in the 68 million people in our respective communities. It’s a powerful statement to work for an organization that cares about helping people be healthy and creates opportunities for people to live longer and healthier lives.”

To maximize career success, Harper says to focus on the three Es: education, exposure and experience. “You have to be educated and be a continuous learner. That’s 10% of your success,” he believes.

With regard to exposure, which he believes provides about 20% of your success, he advises being willing to open yourself to new learn-

ing opportunities. “See it, understand it, touch it, appreciate it. Take on assignments that give you experience and exposure to different tasks.”

The balance goes to experience, according to Harper. “You have to go places no one wants to go, take assignments that are unpopular. At the end of the day, experience trumps everything. It can help you correlate and connect dots, solve problems and lead people. Experiential learning will help you learn to look around the corner to see what’s next.”

Specifically, for those seeking a career in healthcare administration, he recommends joining a professional organization like the National Association of Health Services Executives (NAHSE) or the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE). In addition, seek opportunities for fellowships and volunteering to become exposed to healthcare organizations in your community.

“These offer very powerful networking and educational opportunities, but also offer a culture of support,” Harper explains. “It’s impossible to do your job unless you have a community around you.”

Find career opportunities with Kaiser Permanente at kaiserpermanentejobs.org, and connect on Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, Glassdoor and YouTube.

Mitchell Strengthens Bonds Between Cincinnati Children’s & the Community

Monica Mitchell, Ph.D. helps build bridges to improve children’s health. “What I love about my job is building bridges, literally and figuratively, between the hospital and the community, and in ways that improve the health of children,” says Mitchell, senior director of community relations at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center, and a faculty member in the Cincinnati, OH-based hospital’s division of behavioral medicine and clinical psychology.

Mitchell and her team coordinate community health outreach and education to more than 30,000 children and families each year across the region, including Cincinnati, Northern Kentucky and parts of Indiana.

A pediatric psychologist by training, Mitchell was drawn to the field because of her passion for wanting to make a difference in the lives of children. Over time she expanded her passion to wanting to make a difference in the



Monica Mitchell, Ph.D. is senior director of community relations at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center, and a faculty member in the hospital’s division of behavioral medicine and clinical psychology.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)