

Healthcare Pathways



Lucia Nicholson – Serving Patients of All Ages

One of the ways students are preparing for a rewarding career in health care is a degree or certificate in the Human Services academic program at Folsom Lake College in Northern California. Lucia Nicholson will soon graduate with an Associate Arts Degree in Gerontology and knows that Folsom Lake College is a great place to start.

Folsom Lake College's academic programs in Gerontology, Human Services, and allied health can help students build the skills they need in the workplace. Lucia's studies in Gerontology have given her the skills and insight to assist seniors in leading independent and productive lives.

After working in a convalescent hospital as an Activity Director, she realized the opportunities in health care and wanted to return to school. "Folsom Lake College offered a program close to home and exposed me to the many types of health professionals out there providing services to the community," related Lucia Nicholson.



Lucia Nicholson

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Starting as an intern, she now works nearly full-time at the El Dorado County Human Services Department serving patients of all ages with physical, occupational, and other rehabilitative therapies. "It's the best day when you can help someone on their pathway. I am part of a team, more of a movement, to help people gain work experience, find housing or food, or be more active - whatever they may need. We try to treat the whole person with our network of local agencies and resources," related Lucia, "That's why this is the best job I have ever had."

Earning a Human Services or Gerontology associate degree or certificate of completion at Folsom Lake College can be the start for a variety of careers, including working with county and state youth and family service agencies, Departments of Mental Health, Welfare, or Corrections, or providing care to patients in assisted living centers or nursing facilities.

Once exposed to the wide range of opportunities in health care, many students choose to continue school at the University of California or California State University in order to become licensed Psychologists, Marriage and Family Therapists, Nursing Assistants, Nurses, or Social Workers.

Lucia's advice to others looking for a job in health care is to gain experience and get noticed, "If there is a specific job or healthcare field you want to work in, volunteer! If you

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Geriatrics and Gerontology

Geriatrics and Gerontology are fields of medicine dedicated to the care and well-being of senior citizens. Medical professionals studying internal medicine and family medicine can specialize in geriatric care, which focuses on the long-term health of elderly patients and the unique needs of the population in treating diseases and disabilities. Geriatric workers may provide direct-care services to patients or work with coordinated care providers such as non-profit agencies and organizations, hospitals, or clinics.

Gerontology is a very similar field of medicine, but studies the aging process itself and the physical, mental, and social changes that occur. Healthcare providers in gerontology may conduct research in universities or laboratories to fight age-related diseases through new medical treatments. Others may provide counseling for mental and social changes as patients grow beyond middle age. There are also many sub-specialties of gerontology in psychology and sociology.

These are challenging and rewarding areas of medicine. In the United States, the number of persons over the age of 85 is projected to increase from 5.3 million to 21 million by 2050, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. In order to meet the needs of this aging population, the delivery and scope of healthcare services will need to adapt. In California, 11.3% of the state population is age 65 or older and projected to increase 100% from 2010 to 2030. For those aged 75 years and older, 30% live alone, according to The Scan Foundation. Opportunities for healthcare jobs will grow along with demand for services.

As the body grows older, the changes require special attention and care. In order to provide effective services to the elderly, unique health challenges must be addressed. Loss of vision and hearing, memory loss, limited mobility, and age-related afflictions such as diabetes greatly affect the aging population and will require an increased number of dedicated caregivers. In addition, hospice care and palliative care programs, which give valuable counseling and end-of-life services, may also need to expand and improve.



Much of the long-term care is found at independent or assisted living centers, convalescent homes, or dementia assisted living units. Other services are provided to seniors in the home. Home health services can provide social interaction, help with daily living skills, and offer educational programs to improve quality of life. Seniors also need additional assistance when recovering from illness or injury.

The record numbers of aging Americans in the coming decades will also change the way we view growing older. Today's senior citizens feel younger and are more active than previous generations. These lifestyle changes will reshape healthcare services and the healthcare workforce of the future. Healthcare professionals offering geriatrics and gerontology care services are well prepared to meet the developing needs of the population.

The National Association of Social Workers provides resources and links for healthcare professionals and students to become trained and credentialed social workers at: www.naswdc.org/aging.asp

Learn more about the healthcare needs and long-term care issues for seniors by visiting The Scan Foundation at: www.thescanfoundation.org

...“Lucia Nicholson – Serving Patients of All Ages” (continued from page 1)

love the work, those around you will see it. I often tell friends and family to visit human resources departments and ask them about jobs, and what the minimum job requirements are. More importantly, ask them which schools they hire from.”

Folsom Lake College offers instruction beyond the main campus in Folsom, with two additional learning centers for students interested in pursuing a career in the health field. Two learning centers are now open in Rancho Cordova, near Sacramento, and in Placerville, located in El Dorado County.

For more information on degrees and certificates available at Folsom Lake College in Human Services and Gerontology, please visit: www.flc.losrios.edu/academics/human-services/geron-courses

To find health education programs for selected careers or in your local area, please visit the Health Professions Education Program Search Tool at: www.oshpd.ca.gov/healtheducationprogram/

Healthcare Professionals Serving Seniors

Healthcare workers who provide direct-care to the elderly offer more than good physical health. These dedicated workers offer emotional support through comfort and companionship, and assist with everyday activities, including shopping, cleaning, and personal hygiene. They provide counseling to patients and their families while coordinating medical treatment and locating care providers for needed services. The healthcare services provided continue to bring opportunities for employment.

According to Dr. Sarah Pender, Marriage and Family Therapist, Clinical Psychologist, and Folsom Lake College Gerontology professor, the future for students serving the aging population is bright. “Students who study Geriatrics and Gerontology learn of the special needs of our aging population. They are able to build interview and counseling skills to help the elderly, and recognize and eliminate their own personal biases and beliefs regarding the elderly,” said Dr. Pender. “Students can also receive specialized training in areas such as hospice and palliative care or the sociology of aging to help patients and their families deal with issues of mortality, changes in lifestyle, and mental health.”

Health care for seniors can range from primary care in hospitals and clinics, physical therapy and recovery services, coordinating social activities for senior communities, to specialized treatment for age-related diseases and afflictions. Other services are offered to patients and families in palliative care or hospice centers. Many professionals who serve seniors are social workers. They can provide patients with a wide variety of resources to improve independent living skills, help improve social interaction, and find extended care placement if needed.

“A degree in Human Services/Gerontology can maximize your employment opportunities. Graduates have the skills and credentials to work in many different areas, such as independent or assisted living centers, convalescent hospitals or clinics, or with a growing number of non-profit organizations providing more and more programs, because there are more and more seniors,” relates Dr. Pender.

Careers Serving Seniors

Health Occupation	Role	Minimum Education	Average Salary*
Personal/Home Care Aide	Provides personal care and support for patients in residences or residential care settings	Certificate of Achievement - Associate Degree	\$20,420 (national average)
Home Health Aide	Provides instruction and support to patients and their families on nutrition, hygiene, and basic health-related services under the supervision of a medical professional	Certificate of Achievement - Associate Degree	\$22,790
Medical Assistant	Assists in direct patient care providing treatment, performing physicals, and counseling patients under the supervision of a medical professional	Certificate of Achievement - Associate Degree	\$31,260
Phlebotomist	Assists in direct patient care by conducting interviews or collecting blood, fluids, or cells for analysis	Bachelor's Degree	\$35,380
Healthcare Social Workers	Provide care, psychological support, education, and counseling to patients, families, and groups	Associate Degree – Master's Degree	\$51,330

* Bureau of Labor Statistics, California Employment and Wage Estimates, May 2010

Visit Folsom Lake College's Human Services/Gerontology program at: www.flc.losrios.edu/academics/human-services/geron-courses

For more information on California's programs and services for seniors, please visit the California Department of Aging at: www.aging.ca.gov/

Certificate Programs to Jump Start Your Career

Certificate programs are steps in the right direction for many high school graduates, college students, or anyone looking to start a career in the health industry. People of all ages are enrolling in certificate programs, which can be found throughout California and in a variety of professions.

There are several health careers which can begin with completion of a certification program. These include working in emergency situations as an Emergency Medical Technician, assisting with prescriptions as a pharmacy assistant, working with physicians and nurses in hospitals and clinics, or caring for patients in the home.

Many healthcare professionals working today started by completing a certificate program. Kathleen Winston, PhD, RN is Dean of the Nursing and Allied Health Program at Mt. San Jacinto College in Riverside County. "For many allied health careers, there are both Certificate of Completion and Associate Degree programs. Many students who want to enter the healthcare field and find good employment opportunities can start with a certificate program, such as the Emergency Medical Technician program. After gaining experience, many will continue their studies toward advanced degrees in nursing or in another health career discipline."

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– Kathleen Winston, PhD, RN, Dean, Nursing and Allied Health Program

With certification programs, students can build the necessary skills to become part of a healthcare provider team. Most certification programs last from one to two years and prepare you for professional licensing exams, such as the National Registry exam for Emergency Medical Technicians or the California Certifying Board for Medical Assistants exam.

If you are interested in the healthcare field and making a difference in your community, but not sure which path to follow, talk with a career counselor or think about what type of work interests you the most. Would you like to work in emergency situations? Do you prefer an administrative office, a laboratory, or working with patients in a clinical setting? Would you enjoy working with physicians? There are many rewarding careers to choose from. Earning a certificate can prepare you for quick entry into a health career!

The certificates earned in health professions education programs can be a valuable beginning to a rewarding health career. Put yourself on a path to a challenging and rewarding career, a great combination for a successful future!

TOP HEALTHCARE CAREERS AVAILABLE THROUGH CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS

Career	Description	Average Annual Salary*
Home Health Aide	Cares for patients and clients in a home or residential setting	\$17,702
Pharmacy Technician	Assists pharmacists in preparation and dispensing of medicine	\$25,574
Emergency Medical Technician	Provides emergency medical treatment using specialized equipment and assists with transportation to a hospital or medical facility	\$27,072
Medical Assistant	Performs administrative and clerical tasks for health practitioners in hospitals and private practice settings	\$28,300
Medical Records Technician or Medical Coding Specialist	Maintains medical records and correctly codes patient procedures for reimbursement	\$30,610

* Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2008

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Continuing Your Career Path

Many professionals have found new careers in health care, regardless of age or experience. The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) United Healthcare Workers (UHW) West & Joint Employer Education Fund, a labor-management trust, provides a number of programs promoting education and career advancement for incumbent healthcare workers.

Joshua Keirstead is an example of the Education Fund's success. An internship at Kaiser Permanente–San Jose helped inspire him to pursue nursing. After receiving his Bachelor of Science Degree in Biology and Environmental Studies, Joshua started on his journey to become a nurse by contacting the Education Fund. He had heard that the Education Fund provides prerequisite classes at no cost to students, and other essentials such as books and supplies were included.



Joshua Keirstead

Joshua completed Anatomy, Physiology, and Microbiology courses through the Education Fund's Success Through Educational Preparation (STEP) program. He applied to several programs and chose to attend Samuel Merritt's Accelerated Bachelor's in Nursing (BSN) program, an intensive 12-month curriculum. He received a \$25,000 scholarship from Kaiser's Scholarship Foundation, which requires employees to work for Kaiser for two years after graduation. Joshua completed his BSN program and passed his Registered Nurse (RN) licensing exam with the help of the Education Fund's Forgivable Loan Program, which allowed him to reduce his work hours to attend school.

The Education Fund's STEP Program can assist students through the sequence of science classes for entry into nursing, technical and other allied health programs. Counselors are available to assist with setting academic goals and to help you reach them. If you work in a participating SEIU bargaining unit and are a full- or part-time employee, you may be eligible for academic assistance.

For more information on the Education Fund's STEP Program, visit: www.seiu-uhweduc.org/

Information on SEIU scholarships for members and their children can be located at: www.seiu.org/a/members/fulfill-your-college-goals-with-an-seiu-scholarship.php

...“Certificate Programs Near You” (continued from page 4)

For more information on Mt. San Jacinto College Certificate and Associate Degree programs, please visit: www.msjc.edu/nursingandalliedhealth/Pages/default.aspx

For answers to frequently asked questions about healthcare jobs, please visit: www.explorehealthcareers.org

National health licensing or certification organizations for a variety of health careers can be found at the OSHPD resource page at: www.oshpd.ca.gov/HWDD/HealthLicensingBoards.html

Find a certificate program using the Health Professions Education Program Search Tool!

Located on the OSHPD online resources page, this powerful tool is a great place to start! There are more than 200 health professions education and training programs to choose from. You can focus your search by health career, location, school type, or degree. This tool uses the latest data from the California Postsecondary Education Commission for accuracy.

For example, a search for certificate programs for Emergency Medical Technology/Technician (EMT Paramedic) careers finds 25 community college programs across the state, from Butte College in Butte County, to Southwestern College in San Diego County.

Visit OSHPD's Health Professions Education Program Search Tool at: www.oshpd.ca.gov/healtheducationprogram/

Residencies – What Students Can Expect

A residency program is a multi-year period of training when medical school graduates can practice medicine under the supervision of a fully licensed physician, within a progressive learning environment. Graduates gain first-hand experience interacting with patients and healthcare teams. Many medical professionals participate in a residency program after graduation from medical school, including physicians, nurses, dentists, psychiatrists, and surgeons. It is a demanding period of study designed to foster quick, rational decisions.

Regardless of the area of medicine, medical professionals need a complete understanding of both the science and the practice of medicine. In a residency program, students are exposed to many diverse areas of medical treatment, including general internal medicine, geriatrics, HIV/AIDS, cardiology, breast cancer, urgent care, and other specialty areas of clinical treatment. Other areas of study for residents focus on improving medical interviewing and communication skills, research, and clinical reasoning.

When graduating medical students decide upon a residency program, they must consider what type of health professional to become. Will I provide diagnostic or therapeutic services? Will I concentrate on internal medicine using drugs and medications or surgical procedures? What types of patients do I wish to serve? What age range? The answers to these questions help determine the areas of medicine most appealing to medical graduates. For example, a primary care physician must be able to provide preventative and diagnostic services to families and patients of all ages. This requires a unique set of skills and a broad range of training in internal medicine, pediatrics, geriatrics, and obstetrics and gynecology, among others.

A physician may choose a residency program in a number of specialty areas, including:

Anesthesiology	Dentistry
Emergency Medicine	Family Medicine
Internal Medicine	Gerontology/Geriatrics
Obstetrics and Gynecology	Pediatrics
Psychiatry	Physical Rehabilitation
Radiology	Surgery

Within a specific branch of medicine, the first year of a residency program is spent on the fundamentals, the second year introduces subspecialties, and the third year brings increased responsibility and patient interaction. Residencies can last from three to seven years, depending on the specialized field of study. If a physician finishes a residency, he or she can choose to continue studying in a fellowship program.

Fellowship programs can train physicians on treating specific diseases or help create mastery of surgical



procedures. Other programs offer specialty training and experiences needed to meet the needs of a specific population. Geriatric medicine offers a multidisciplinary approach to patient care in a broad range of settings. Geriatric fellows will study aging, rehabilitation, mental competence, and palliative care among others. They will also need strong interpersonal communication skills in order to work to meet patient needs and coordinate services provided by physicians, nurses, social workers, and family members. Advanced clinical training is also available in areas such as geriatric psychiatry, pharmacology, and rheumatology for aging populations.

The life of a medical resident can be very challenging. The work schedule is demanding, and residents must learn to make quick decisions in high-pressure situations. Industry standards now limit residents to an average of 80 hours a week (averaged over four weeks) including long overnight shifts every third or fourth day – otherwise known as being “on call.”

In most states, completing residency training is a requirement to practice medicine. The long shifts and heavy workload build the knowledge, skills, and attitude needed for healthcare professionals to be effective and resourceful in providing care. Choosing a medical career and developing expertise in a specialized area of medicine in a residency program is not easy. But the experience will assist you in finding your path and prepare you for a rewarding career as a medical professional.

For more information on family practice and other medical specialties, visit the American Medical Association at: www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/education-careers/becoming-physician/choosing-specialty.page?

The American Geriatrics Society offers information on education and career paths, including profiles of health professionals who care for aging adults, at: www.americangeriatrics.org/health_care_professionals/profiles_in_geriatrics/

To find health education programs for selected careers or in your local area, please visit the Health Professions Education Program Search Tool at: www.oshpd.ca.gov/healtheducationprogram/

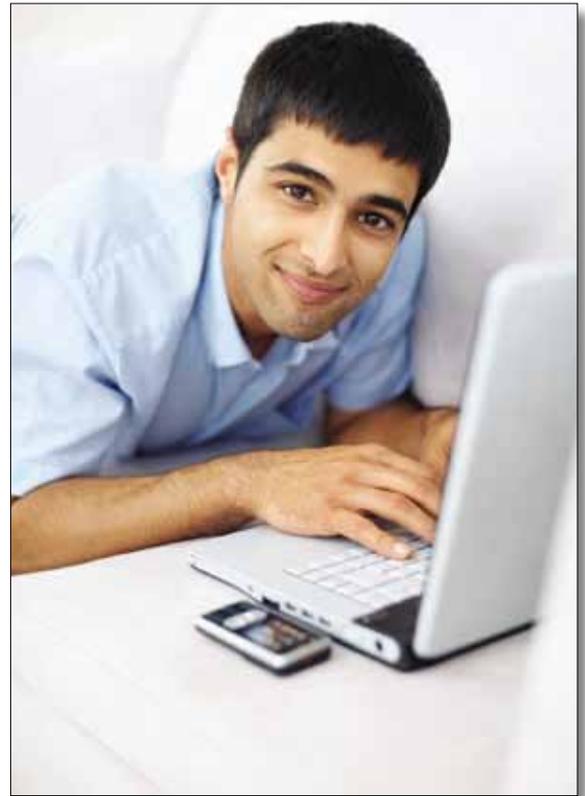
Avoiding Injuries When Typing, Texting or Gaming

The positions we find ourselves in when using laptops, smart phones, tablets, video games or other electronic devices can cause discomfort, pain, or even permanent physical damage! As we spend more time away from the desktop computer, we must take care to avoid awkward positions and possible damaging repetitive tasks.

Most of us are familiar with the proper body positions when at computer desks, but we sometimes forget about back support, wrist position, or a relaxed head and neck position when using devices on the go. Laptop or netbook computer users often work away from a table and chair – in “comfortable” settings, such as coffeehouses, student lounges, or libraries. But having the ability to take your work with you wherever you go can also be a risk to your health.

Repetitive motion injuries or strain disorders, such as carpal tunnel syndrome, are caused by repetitive tasks or sustained positions causing muscle strain. Tendinitis can also occur in arms, shoulders, and neck. Overuse of thumbs from texting or gaming can result in DeQuervain’s Tenosynovitis, a severe condition of tendon strain.

To avoid the risks of injury, ergonomic experts recommend frequent breaks, changing your position often, and stretching muscles and joints. We must also be continually aware of ourselves to avoid awkward positions of slouched bodies with angled hands and wrists when using devices for extended periods of time. Eye strain can also result from poor lighting or bad positioning of screens and monitors.



Ergonomic Tips for using Computer and Electronic Devices

- Be aware of your posture in everyday settings and every work situation.
- Support your lower back and lumbar area.
- Adjust your monitor distance to avoid leaning while reading and be sure the top of the screen is at or below eye level.
- Give your eyes a chance to rest every 20 minutes.
- Reduce monitor glare and find a well-lit area to work in.
- When using telephones or mobile devices, keep your head upright and shoulders relaxed.
- Keep neutral wrist positions when using a keyboard or mouse.
- Get up and move. Stretch at least every half hour.

When reading a book in a sitting position, we tend to lean back. When using computers or other devices, we tend to lean forward, hunching our shoulders. Next time you are looking for a workplace, try to find a comfortable table and chair, lean back, support your back and feet, and give your arms and wrists the support they need. If you are feeling uncomfortable, take a break and reposition yourself. Give your muscles a break; they work hard enough already!

To learn more about correct body positions when using computers or laptops, visit the interactive “SmartMoves” Web site presented by Kaiser Permanente at: www.permanente.net/homepage/kaiser/video/ergonomics/index.html

For simple exercises to relieve stress and strain from using electronic devices, please visit: www.ergonomics.ucla.edu/oldergo/Ergowebv2.0/articles/exercise.htm

For tips to prevent repetitive stress injuries, visit LiveStrong at: www.livestrong.com/article/299669-tips-to-prevent-repetitive-stress-injury/

Scholarships and Loan Repayment

The Health Professions Education Foundation (Foundation) has provided scholarships and loan repayments to aspiring and practicing health professionals throughout California since 1987. A wide variety of programs are provided to match students and health professionals with financial assistance to continue school or repay student loans. In return for receiving scholarship or loan repayment funds, recipients must agree to practice in a medically underserved area of California from one to four years.



Eligible Health Professions:

Physicians

Mental Health providers

Vocational Nursing/Registered Nursing

Nurse Practitioner/Nurse Midwifery

Physician Assistant

Dentistry/Dental Hygiene

Allied Health

(includes medical assisting, pharmacy, laboratory technology, physical therapy, radiation therapy, speech therapy, and social work, among others)

If you are a graduating health professional or currently enrolled in a healthcare education program, assistance may be available to ease your financial burdens. Assistance with application requirements and deadlines is also available. The Foundation now offers updates on scholarships and loan repayment programs via Twitter.

Find out more about the Health Professions Education Foundation scholarship and loan repayment programs at: www.oshpd.ca.gov/HPEF/index.html.

Healthcare Pathways

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