

Other health workers

As the functions of medical care become increasingly specialized and expensive, there has been great expansion of the professional and technical occupations in the health field to supplement and often to take over functions previously performed by physicians, dentists, and nurses. To some extent, this trend reflects the substitution of less expensive medical care for the more expensive services of physicians, dentists, and nurses. However, the growing complexity of medical care and equipment requires more workers with specialized professional and technical training.

More than 1.8 million workers were employed in health-related occupations in 1955. Of this total, about 750,000 were medical doctors, dentists, and professional nurses. The remaining auxiliary medical workers providing health services included: ⁴⁰

Student nurses.....	113,000
Practical nurses.....	175,000
Hospital attendants.....	146,000
Nursing aids.....	138,000
Pharmacists.....	111,000
Medical laboratory technicians.....	50,000
Dental technicians.....	21,000
X-ray technicians.....	50,000
Dietitians, nutritionists.....	22,000
Chiropractors.....	25,000
Osteopathic physicians.....	12,000
Veterinarians.....	17,000
Medical record librarians.....	7,000
Medical social workers.....	5,000
Psychiatric social workers.....	5,000
Physical therapists.....	7,000
Occupational therapists.....	6,000
Speech, hearing therapists.....	4,000
Rehabilitation counselors.....	2,000
Hospital and medical program directors.....	9,000

In addition to the occupations listed above, office assistants to physicians and dentists totaled about 130,000. Nonprofessional attendants, orderlies and ward maids in hospitals and other health institutions numbered about 200,000.

New paramedical occupations, requiring additional training and new skills, tend to appear with advances in medical science. The major training field is necessarily the hospital, which is a focus for all health training, but increasing emphasis by professional organizations on maintenance of high standards within their specialty has resulted in longer training and greater reliance on university graduate degree programs for training. Lengthening of the training period tends to discourage people from entering these occupations and also raises the income requirements of those completing the training. Thus, at the same time that rising professional standards push up the cost of paramedical services, relatively low salaries in paramedical occupations continue to deter recruitment of enough trained workers to overcome persistent shortages in these occupations.

Apart from doctors and dentists, about 9 out of 10 professional health workers are women.⁴¹ Thus, a characteristic employment prob-

⁴⁰ U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Health Manpower Chart Book, Public Health Service Publication No. 511, 1957, p. 1.

⁴¹ Walter L. Johnson, "Personnel Shortages in the Health Field and Working Patterns of Women," Public Health Reports, January 1957, vol. 72, No. 1, p. 61.