

## Health Care Industry Continues Hiring Spree

Several reports released in March and April suggest demand for health care jobs, long stronger than the demand for jobs as a whole, is growing.

A monthly report on online job ads released March 31 by the Conference Board, a nonprofit global business organization, found that the number of postings overall was unchanged. But the number for health care practitioners and technical workers, a category that includes physicians, grew by more than 88,000 to 627,300 ads in March from 539,200 in February. Ads in March were at their highest level since April 2008.

The largest increase in demand was for physical and occupational therapists, registered nurses and speech pathologists.

The ratio of unemployed health practitioners to advertised positions also was low, with 0.37 people in these professions looking for a job per listing. The ratio for health care support positions was higher, with 2.83 unemployed people in this occupational category for each job advertised, although the number of these types of ads also grew to 125,400 in March from 111,600 in February.

**162,000 new jobs were created in the U.S. in March 2010, including 26,800 in health care.**

"There are a lot more people looking for [health care support] work than the number of advertised vacancies," said June Shelp, the Conference Board's vice president. "It's exactly the opposite if you look at practitioners and technicians. There are more ads for them."

Preliminary numbers released April 2 by the Bureau of Labor Statistics paint a similar picture. The unemployment rate held steady at 9.7%, but there were approximately 162,000 new positions added. This number included 26,800 new jobs in health care. Broken down further, the physician offices added 4,000 positions, and hospitals created 1,900.

But other data released April 5 by Health Workforce Solutions in San Francisco indicate that job creation in health care varies widely by region. The company's Labor Market Pulse Index showed that demand for health care professionals had slowed in the last quarter, but grew the most in the San Francisco; Seattle; Tampa, Fla.; and Philadelphia metropolitan areas. It grew the least in the New York metro/Northern New Jersey area; Sacramento, Calif.; and St. Louis, although experts believe demand will grow in all regions soon.

"Now [that] there is clarity around health care reform, we expect hiring plans to be much more aggressive over the next couple of quarters, particularly when compared to last year," said David Cherner, managing partner of Health Workforce Solutions, in a statement.

Cherner said he expected "the most competitive health care labor market we have ever seen."

## Jobs lost, jobs gained

The health care industry continued to add jobs through the recession, even when the economy as a whole saw losses. Here is how many positions were created or eliminated each month:

	Health care jobs		All jobs	
	2009	2010	2009	2010
<b>March</b>	13,100	26,800	-753,000	162,000
<b>February</b>	17,800	14,100	-726,000	-14,000
<b>January</b>	12,200	13,400	-779,000	14,000

Note: Data for February and March are preliminary.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics