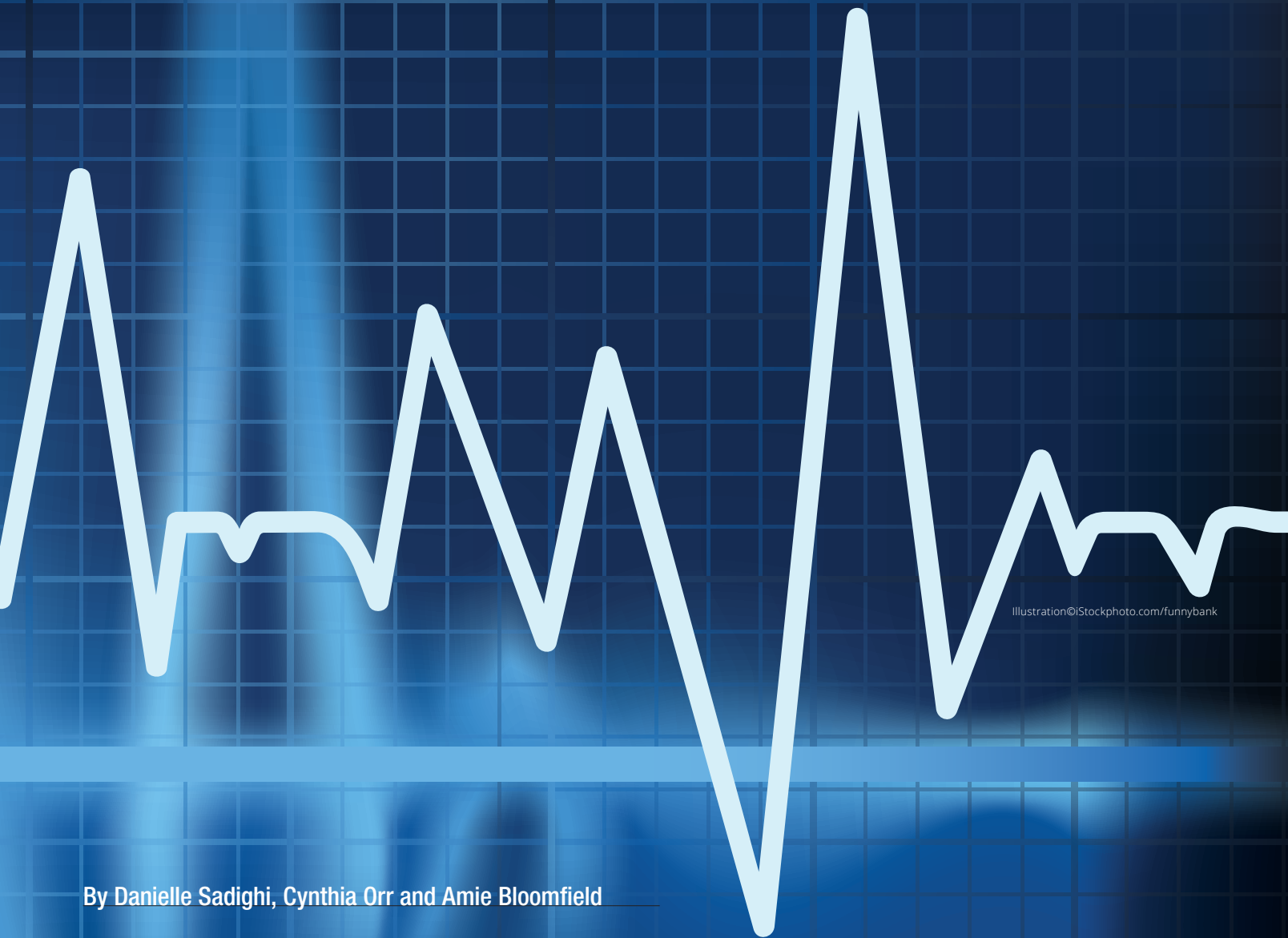




POSITIONED TO
FILL HEALTH-CARE
JOB DEMANDS



By Danielle Sadighi, Cynthia Orr and Amie Bloomfield

At one time or another, most of us will require health-care services. An aging baby boomer generation has placed a higher demand on health services, and there is a significant need for qualified health-care workers. Add in a shortage of existing health-care workers and the possibility of expanding job responsibilities for certain health-care positions, and it is evident that preparing individuals to meet the recent projections published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) becomes even more important to our nation's economic vitality. According to the BLS, the health-care

field will add the most new jobs between 2012 and 2022, with total employment projected to increase 10.8 percent, or 15.6 million people, during the decade. These large numbers provide exciting opportunities for career and technical education (CTE) to help meet the growth projections in the health-care field.

Meeting the Demand

In recent years, the health-care industry has seen steady growth. While a large portion of the projected jobs require post-secondary education, there is also growth anticipated for jobs that require a high school diploma, technical training and

industry certifications. America's CTE system has been described as a uniquely flexible system that can easily respond to changes in labor market conditions. With a strong focus on a hands-on approach and occupation-specific skills, upon graduation CTE students exit their programs armed with the skills and knowledge to be productive members of the nation's workforce.

There are also increased opportunities for students to earn industry-based credentials during their secondary program of study, which they can build on as they progress in their respective fields. Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce identified 25 of the top certifications earned at the secondary level. Health-care-related certifications comprise 14 of the 25 industry-based credentials.

Naturally, the best way to meet the demand is to ensure there is a large enough supply. And supply does not just mean numbers—it means numbers of individu-

als who have successfully learned the skills necessary to fill these very important positions. One way to verify skills is through an industry-based credential. According to a 2012 study completed by the Center on Education and the Workforce, by 2018 the nation will need at least 4.7 million postsecondary certificates, which is a 407 percent increase over 2010 when only one million postsecondary certificates were awarded. The same study also indicated that certificate holders who work in their field earn 37 percent more than the 56 percent who do not work in the field related to their training. In layman's terms, a person holding a certificate could be earning more than an individual who has graduated college with a bachelor's degree.

A report by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) identifies health care as an occupational area with increasing participation, as evidenced by high school graduates earning credits from 1990 to 2009 (Table 1).

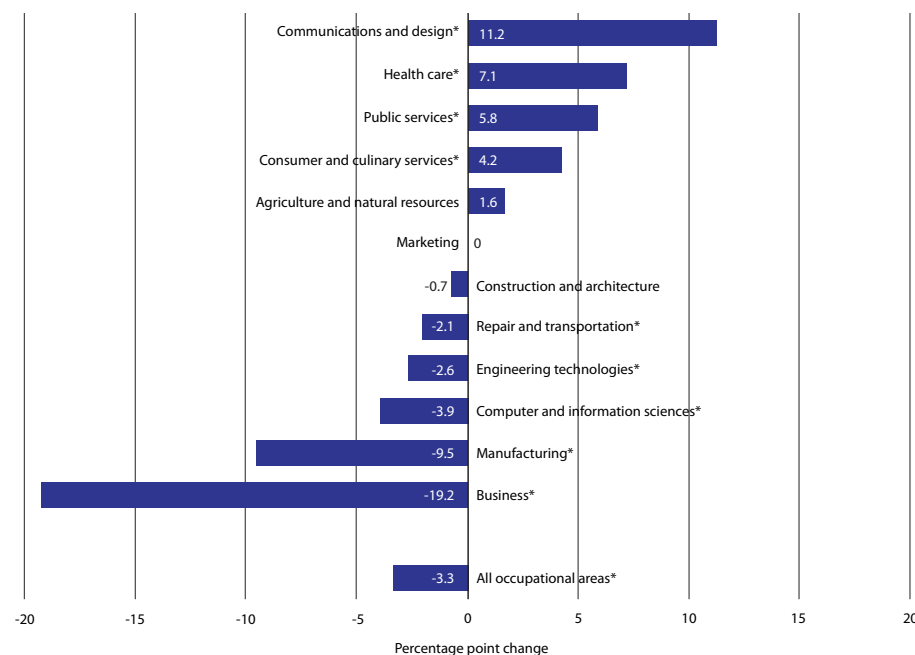
Medical Assisting

Growth in health-care programs has also occurred at the postsecondary level, as reported by the American Medical Certification Association (AMCA). AMCA is a national organization with extensive experience in the health-care field, with a strong focus on medical assisting. The organization is extremely familiar with the growth projections made by BLS, and uses these projections as one of the guiding principles in providing products and services to its constituents. AMCA has witnessed an increase of private postsecondary schools and learning institutions that are currently offering medical assistant classes, as well as a steady rise in the number of newly added programs. According to AMCA's research, schools offering medical assistant courses have seen a steady increase in enrollment, second only to dental assisting. Over 78 percent of the AMCA-approved testing sites across the country are offering medical assisting programs, and this is in direct response to the 2013–2014 *Occupational Outlook Handbook* which indicates that by 2020, the projected increase for medical assistants will grow by 31 percent.

AMCA has recently extended its reach into the secondary market through a collaboration with NOCTI. The collaboration is focused on providing an avenue for students to earn an industry-based credential and to meet the demand for skilled health-care workers, as well as addressing the need in the patient-care industry for clinical medical assistants. Using NOCTI's industry-driven medical assisting technical skill assessment, students who achieve the AMCA-determined cut score are eligible to take the AMCA Clinical Medical Assistant Certification (CMAC) exam. Prior to this venture, secondary students were limited in their opportunities to take the CMAC exam.

The two organizations are exploring other areas for collaboration within the allied health-care industry, with discus-

Table 1. Change in the percentage of public high school graduates earning credits in each occupational area from 1990 to 2009.



*Significantly different ($p < .05$) from zero.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, High School Transcript Study, 1990, 2000, 2005 and 2009.

sions underway regarding the medical records and health information technician field. Employment of medical records and health information technicians is expected to increase by 21 percent from 2010 to 2020. The Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act provides economic stimulus incentive payments for adopting and implementing electronic medical records (EMR) or electronic health records (EHR) systems. Over \$27 billion has been allocated to assist doctors in the transition from paper medical records to electronic record systems. Timing is important; physicians will be assessed penalties for not adopting an EMR/EHR system by 2015. In addition, as of January 1, 2014, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) require that medical assistants and billers and coders receive independent certification to enter orders into an EHR, such as labs, imaging studies, pro-forma Rx, progress notes and even a simple urine test.

This change will allow physician offices to use medical assistants, billers and coders, receptionists and other administrative personnel as cost-effective options for computer physician order entry, provided they have earned a recognized credential in this area.

From the growth projections to the implementation of laws related to health care, there still remains some uncertainty about the future of this high-demand field. One thing is certain: individuals with the education and skills to fill these positions are needed, and CTE will play an important role in meeting the nation's demand. **I**

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Resources

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