

THE VALUE OF EARLY PATHWAYS INTO THE ALLIED HEALTH WORKFORCE

PERSONAL STORY

As a high school student, Esteban Ramirez took advantage of an allied health career pathway program offered by his school district, Pima Joint Technical Education District (JTED) in partnership with Tucson Medical Center (TMC) and National Healthcareer Association (NHA). The one-year healthcare foundations course that Esteban took his junior year sparked his interest in pursuing his own healthcare career. In his last year of high school, Esteban completed classes that prepared him with essential medical knowledge and soft skills and included an 8-week rotation at a hospital giving him real-life experience caring for patients.

Programs like the one offered with JTED do not replace high school education courses but rather allow students to explore career opportunities while attaining their high school diploma. One goal of these programs is to graduate job-ready students so that those who immediately want to enter the workforce are qualified to do so. In Esteban's case, he received his Patient Care Technician (PCT) certification through NHA and was hired on with TMC, allowing him to transition into a part-time career that allows him to continue to develop his skills while also attending college full time.

THE ROLE OF PATIENT CARE TECHNICIANS

Patient Care Technicians like Esteban are one of many vital allied health roles that support our healthcare system. They are often the first ones that a patient sees and allow nurses and doctors to practice at the top of their license, alleviating burnout and improving care efficiency by assisting with daily living and patient care, performing safety checks, maintaining a clean patient environment, providing



emotional support, monitoring and recording vital signs, collecting laboratory specimens and performing EKG and phlebotomy procedures.

Allied health professionals like PCTs are some of the most in-demand professions but unfortunately, too many care facilities find themselves short-staffed. Currently, 85% of healthcare facilities report that they are facing an allied health shortage and the demand for allied health careers is projected to grow by as much as 14% over the next decade.

THE VALUE OF EARLY CERTIFICATION

Early pathways like career and technical education (CTE) programs in high schools are an important way to build the pipeline of students entering the healthcare workforce. Earning an industry-recognized certification in an allied

health role is also a low-barrier entry point for students to enter the workforce directly out of high school and qualify for a rewarding and stable healthcare career. The large majority (85%) of healthcare employers are more likely to interview and hire a candidate with a nationally recognized certification over someone without, a promising statistic for students considering careers in this high-demand field.

NEXT STEPS

Esteban is continuing his studies and plans to major in biomedical sciences at the University of Arizona so he can continue to medical school, where he aspires to become a plastic surgeon and help others feel confident in who they are. Throughout his training journey and his time working as a PCT, Esteban recognized the impact his role can have on people. And not just patients are benefiting from Esteban's care, as he's noted how the mood of doctors and nurses can influence how patients react- something that is impacted by burnout, heavy workloads, and lack of support – and can be alleviated by the support of allied health professionals.

Esteban expressed concern about the lack of PCTs in his facility and around the country - he juggles about 15 patients on any given day. Days when his facility is down even by one PCT can be a challenge across the entire care team. That's why Congress must act to solve this workforce crisis. By supporting allied health training and certification programs, the U.S. can encourage the next generation of high school students to pursue a career in allied health. The healthcare workforce needs these students now more than ever.



Thank you to National Healthcareer Association for contributing this powerful case study to the Healthcare Workforce Coalition.

CONGRESS: SUPPORT ALLIED HEALTH TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS

Address Significant Workforce Shortages in Our Nation's Healthcare System
By Enabling More Students Like Esteban to Earn Allied Health Certifications