



COMPLETE GUIDE TO
**A CAREER IN HEALTHCARE
MANAGEMENT**



OUR LADY OF THE LAKE UNIVERSITY



According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)¹, in the next 10 years, healthcare will add more jobs than any other industry. This growth is expected to affect all positions in the healthcare field and – as this growth is realized – there will be an array of career opportunities for those with a passion for helping others.

If you are already a healthcare professional, you may be in the best position to take advantage of this projected expansion. But on-the-job experience alone may not be enough.

To excel in healthcare management, aspiring professionals will also be expected to demonstrate expertise in technology and cross-functional business management to fully grasp transformations unfolding in healthcare.

Simply put: as the healthcare industry expands, facilities will need leaders with those skills traditionally associated with healthcare, but they will also look for skills and insight typically associated with corporate leadership.

For those interested in a healthcare management career path, this guide provides an overview of the proficiencies, education, and requirements that will be needed in the coming years.

WHAT IS HEALTHCARE ADMINISTRATION?

Like every other business, healthcare organizations seek professionals who can oversee production and ensure a facility and its staff function effectively.

This is where healthcare managers or healthcare administrators come in (the terms are often used interchangeably amongst healthcare facilities and organizations). In fact, the job titles “healthcare manager” and “healthcare administrator” fail to fully convey the crucial responsibilities that come with these important roles.

Typically, healthcare managers/administrators oversee:

- Health planning services
- Organizational structure
- Policy development and analysis
- Asset and risk management

In other words, these are not simply “desk jobs.” Instead, managers and administrators help manage nearly every aspect of a medical office, clinic, mid-size facility or hospital. Their day-to-day decisions shape the experiences of patients, staff, and even the communities they serve.

While healthcare managers primarily hire, schedule and manage staff members, they can also be asked to assist in establishing policies and overseeing the day-to-day procedures. They may be responsible for supervising external relations or negotiate contracts with outside vendors and consultants. They may even be asked to speak to the media on behalf of their organization.

Additionally, it is not uncommon to find healthcare managers contributing to non-medical departmental tasks such as legal, marketing, finance, and operations.

HEALTHCARE MANAGER AND ADMINISTRATOR REQUIREMENTS

Like leaders and executives in every industry, healthcare managers and administrators are expected to have a firm grasp of the complexities unique to healthcare. They need a deep understanding of the specialized language of the field, insight into the financial issues facing healthcare facilities, sensitivities to internal politics, and the ability to organize and prioritize.

Other desired traits include:

- Strong communication skills
- Willingness to learn
- Ability to collaborate
- Commitment to ethics and integrity
- Flexibility

HOW TO BECOME A HEALTHCARE ADMINISTRATOR

Traditionally, healthcare managers and administrators worked their way up through the ranks of an organization. But, in today's competitive and sophisticated market, an advanced degree – one reflecting knowledge beyond healthcare – has become the norm for those seeking leadership roles in healthcare.

HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATOR EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

Even those with extensive experience could benefit from earning an advanced degree. Although bachelor's degree-level instructions provide a great general introduction and understanding of healthcare, earning an advanced degree tells potential employers a candidate is committed to the field for the long term.

It also signals a broader understanding of current healthcare trends – and insight into trends outside of healthcare. More importantly, an advanced degree instills the aspiring healthcare professional with a deeper understanding of business and management.

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HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATOR CAREER PATH

As stated at the outset of this guide, healthcare is poised for significant growth – at a rate outpacing nearly every other field. The BLS² attributes this to several factors: a growing U.S. population, an aging demographic, an escalation of chronic conditions such as diabetes and obesity, advances in medicine, and the Affordable Care Act.

These factors have collectively spurred greater demand for hospitals, clinics, treatment centers, and nursing facilities, which in turn has given rise to the need for more managers and administrators to ensure everything runs smoothly – and cost-efficiently. Healthcare expenses³ continue to grow in the U.S. – as do demands that those costs be better managed.

WHY EFFICIENT HEALTHCARE ADMINISTRATORS ARE NEEDED

As of 2014, the BLS determined more than 333,000 medical and health service managers were employed at hospitals, assisted living centers, and group medical facilities across the U.S. By 2022, the agency projects opportunities in these sectors will expand by 23% – an increase that outpaces other industries. Changes in healthcare laws, technology, and

regulations are necessitating the need for leaders to understand today's increasingly complex healthcare landscape. Because healthcare administrators oversee the day-to-day operations of medical practices, clinics, departments or entire facilities, they are expected to understand the changing regulatory landscape as well as emerging technologies.

Completing graduate-level coursework with a curriculum that includes business, technology, and finance classes enhances a job candidate's cross-functional leadership skills and improves his or her standing in the eyes of potential employers.

Earning advanced academic credentials can also be financially rewarding. According to the [BLS statistics](#), the average salary for medical and health services managers was about \$92,810 in 2014.⁴ Although most health services management opportunities require a bachelor's degree, it is becoming increasingly common for recruiters to look for healthcare managers and administrators who have earned a master's degree.

ADVANCED HEALTHCARE ADMINISTRATION ROLES

Modern healthcare is a complex industry, and aspiring healthcare management professionals need skillsets beyond medical training. It is common for healthcare management professionals to be asked to analyze data, conduct research, and develop reports using the latest technological tools.

The growing demand for healthcare management professionals is not limited to opportunities at traditional facilities. Non-medical environments also have a need for healthcare management professionals. These include:

- Hospital and healthcare system management
- Medical group practice administration
- Pharmaceutical and biotechnology organizations
- Managed care facilities
- Health informatics firms
- Supply chain organizations
- Government and policy organizations
- Health insurance providers
- Healthcare consulting

By earning an MBA in Healthcare Management, the healthcare professional can serve in non-traditional roles – because many of the positions require an understanding of business, technology and communication. Some of these career paths include:

HEALTHCARE ENTREPRENEURS AND EXECUTIVES

Drawing on proficiencies in leadership and entrepreneurship, healthcare executives can elevate themselves to positions of authority where they oversee medical facility operations or manage a facility's financial strategy.

A background in business administration or economics helps prepare them to serve in these oversight roles.

Most healthcare executives are expected to hold an advanced degree, and the earnings potential for executive-level positions is high. According to an analysis conducted by The New York Times, as of 2015, the average hospital

[CEO earns about \\$386,000](#) and a hospital administrator earns about \$237,000 annually.

HEALTHCARE SOFTWARE SALES

Sales professionals generally interact with care providers to ensure their facilities offer the most relevant healthcare solutions. Medical organizations rely on the expertise that sales professionals offer to stay abreast of the latest medical devices, technology, and software.

Modern electronic health records (EHR) have become the connective tissue between medical providers and patients. Software sales professionals are called on to work with doctors and their staff to identify the EHR tools that can best help manage client records and relationships.

Because their insight is highly valued, healthcare software sales professionals can benefit from a deep understanding of healthcare jargon – and the business side of healthcare. Earning a master's degree can help instill this knowledge in the sales professional.

Salaries in this field are usually a base rate plus commission. The average annual pay can exceed \$100,000.

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR

In addition to understanding the healthcare field, business administrators must also have a broad-based knowledge applicable outside of the field. Skills in finance, marketing, operations, and sales can empower administrators to grow in less traditional roles, serving in a variety of industries. For instance, these skills can also prove valuable in helping to manage nursing homes or laboratories. An understanding of business and finance would also be useful for leadership roles in the medical insurance field.



According to the BLS, as of 2015, the average median salary for healthcare administrator roles is \$94,500 annually. However, higher levels of education usually correlate with higher salaries.

PROJECT MANAGER

With the ongoing transformation of healthcare, the need for specialized project managers continues to grow. Healthcare project managers may find opportunities in patient services, quality control, business development, finance, practice operations, or IT project management.

Project managers typically focus on improving efficiencies and cutting costs. Changes in federal laws have resulted in medical facilities hiring project managers to help improve patient services, oversee conversions of files to electronic records – or simply to streamline processes.

To be successful in this lucrative profession, individuals must have a proficiency in project management and healthcare services. The average salary for a project manager who has earned an MBA is \$96,000.

NURSE ADMINISTRATOR

Much like a nurse manager, nurse administrators oversee the nursing staff of a medical facility – but often on a larger scale. Nurse administrators generally hold at least a bachelor’s degree and are licensed registered nurses (RN); but increasingly, the requirement for a master’s degree is becoming common.

Unlike nurse managers, nurse administrators usually have limited patient contact. Their day-to-day duties more likely include meetings with directors and executives. They are responsible for managing staff, facilities, finance, and admissions, and the average salary for a nurse administrator exceeds \$93,000.

Regardless of the career path you choose, earning a graduate degree may better position you to advance in the field and secure a leadership role.

AN MBA IS JUST THE BEGINNING

Even after earning an MBA in Healthcare Management, it is important for healthcare professionals to stay connected to all aspects of healthcare. This connection should not be limited to networking with peers (although that is important); you also make a point of interacting with patients and community members.

By “getting out of the office” from time to time, it broadens your understanding of the concerns and issues facing those that rely on the services you and your organization provide.

One of the most effective methods of reinforcing your connections to both colleagues and consumers – while remaining up-to-date on changes in healthcare – is to explore membership in professional organizations.

Not only can these organizations offer valuable local and national networking opportunities, but they also offer courses, seminars, and certification opportunities that enable you to keep your professional skills sharp.

Additionally, many announce volunteering opportunities and sponsor community-minded events that help keep you on the “front line” of healthcare. They may also have information on mentoring opportunities.

There are many professional organizations to choose from. Below are just a few to consider:

- [The American Association of Healthcare Administrative Management \(AAHAM\)](#) is a national professional association of more than 300 healthcare patient financial services professionals representing hospitals, clinics, billing offices, physicians and vendors.
- [The Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education \(CAHME\)](#) bills itself as an interdisciplinary group of educational, professional, clinical, and other health sector organizations devoted to quality improvement of education for healthcare management and administration professionals. CAHME is also involved in establishing educational standards for healthcare management graduates around the globe.
- [The American College of Healthcare Executives](#) is an international professional group with more than 40,000 members made up of healthcare executives from hospitals and other organizations. ACHE also offers

professional credentials and various board certifications as well.

- [Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society \(HIMSS\)](#) is a non-profit working for “better health through information technology.” It offers industry thought leadership, community building, professional development, public policy, and events and includes 61,000 individual members.

APPLY HERE: GAIN WELL ROUNDED BUSINESS AND HEALTHCARE SKILLS

As you can see, a career in healthcare management and healthcare administration can be both financially and personally rewarding. A great first step is to earn a Master of Business Administration with a focus in [Healthcare Management](#) from Our Lady of the Lake University (OLLU).

The program was designed to integrate effective leadership practices with practical solutions to better prepare individuals for advancement in today’s healthcare field. The online program emphasizes the growing role that modern corporate methodologies now play in driving performance and achieving desired financial goals for healthcare organizations.

By giving students access to proven strategies and streamlined processes, OLLU equips graduates with the skills and tools needed to efficiently lead staff and organizations in today's healthcare environment.

Whether new to a healthcare career path or a long-time practitioner, earning an online MBA with a specialization in Healthcare Management ingrains in you a solid understanding of business and financial management, executive functions, and administration. OLLU's unique curriculum is designed to prepare future leaders for a wide variety of careers in healthcare administration.

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN AT OLLU

TECHNOLOGY, LAW AND ETHICS KNOWLEDGE

Candidates will be introduced to administrative and constitutional law and learn how it relates to practice and patient rights. They will also explore common ethical challenges facing the healthcare professionals.

CYBERCARE

Concierge services are becoming increasingly common in healthcare. Cybercare is a benefit to immobile patients and those with needs that do not require a visit to an office or facility. The MBA program offers an introduction to the laws and policies associated with this new high-tech form of patient care.

FINANCES

The MBA program will include coursework covering a range of information relevant to healthcare finances. From managing a budget, to understanding provider reimbursement and insurance billing issues, the course curriculum includes an overview of a multitude of factors that impact the bottom line. MBA candidates

are also introduced to managed care plans as well as strategic responses of medical providers.

CHANGING REGULATIONS

Healthcare continues to be one of the most regulated industries. Because of ongoing changes to the regulatory side of the business, MBA candidates will be exposed to an array of regulation-focused coursework.

NEXT STEPS

If you are considering pursuing a leadership role in healthcare – or are already an established professional looking to take your career to the next level – earning an [MBA with a focus in Healthcare Management](#) from OLLU can broaden your professional prospects.

Projected healthcare growth opportunities remain stronger than those found with other career paths. One recent BLS study determined that during the last three recessions healthcare added jobs while most other industries saw employment downturns.

If a leadership role offering stability and strong earnings potential appeals to you, consider earning your online MBA today. Learn more about OLLU's online MBA, by contacting a healthcare education specialist at 855-275-1082 or [request more information](#) today.

[Learn More Now!](#)

SOURCES:

- 1) <http://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2014/spring/art03.pdf>
- 2) <http://www.forbes.com/sites/danmunro/2015/01/04/u-s-healthcare-spending-on-track-to-hit-10000-per-person-this-year/>
- 3) <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/management/medical-and-health-services-managers.htm>
- 4) <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2011/04/art2full.pdf>