

# CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN HEALTH CARE MANAGEMENT

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## *Perspectives from the Field*

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# Dedication

We dedicate this book to our loving spouses, Dale Buchbinder  
and Suzanne Gilchrist-Thompson,  
who kept asking:  
“ARE YOU DONE YET?”



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# Preface

Every good book begins with a vision. Having taught and mentored healthcare management students for almost two decades, we recognize that students yearn for guidance in making the specific connection between the *profession* of healthcare management and *career opportunities* they could consider. Since no current book like this exists, we decided to write one. That was our vision—to develop a helpful, reader-friendly book based on the real-world stories of practicing managers that would inform students about the opportunities within healthcare management, as well as inspire those interested in becoming future healthcare managers.

To carry out our vision, we chose to describe specific areas and levels of employment in the book so readers would have a sense of what healthcare managers do in a given setting at a particular point in their career. To ensure proper coverage of the field, we created a matrix and identified the settings we wanted to represent in our sample and strove to find a person for each setting at the supervisor/line or staff, mid-level/director, or executive/senior level of his or her career. Then we used an online program to launch the survey.

We are extremely pleased with the results. We invited 52 healthcare managers to participate; 42 completed the survey, reviewed their profiles, and granted written permission to publish them. This excellent response rate of 81% was due, in large part, to the power of our relationships with the participants: alumni of our programs, colleagues in professional organizations, preceptors for our student interns, and past coworkers who gave generously of their time, expertise, and wisdom. They did this out of a deep commitment to the field of healthcare management and as a gift to future students. We are deeply grateful to our participants for their great generosity of time and expertise. This book would not have been possible without them.

*Career Opportunities in Health Care Management: Perspectives from the Field* is a concise, reader-friendly, introductory healthcare management

book that covers a wide variety of career opportunities in a broad range of direct healthcare settings, such as hospitals, physician practices, nursing homes, and clinics, and non-direct healthcare settings, such as associations, health insurance companies, medical suppliers, and consulting firms. Filled with first-person accounts from healthcare managers working in the field, these profiles will engage the reader's imagination, inform them of key issues associated with these important roles, as well as what makes these healthcare managers happy and eager to go to work in the morning. Beginning with an individualized Healthcare Management Talent Quotient Quiz and ending with a guide to finding a job in healthcare management, this hands-on, student-friendly and teacher-friendly text is the perfect resource for students of healthcare management, nursing, allied health, business administration, pharmacy, occupational therapy, public administration, and public health. Along with dynamic writing and stories from real healthcare managers, this book features:

- Chapters written by experienced authors using an active voice to grab the reader's attention.
- An individualized Healthcare Management Talent Quotient Quiz to assess each student's baseline aptitude and identify skills gaps that need to be addressed.
- Over 40 lively, first-person profiles of healthcare managers working in the field covering everything from educational background and how they first became interested in healthcare management, to advice for future healthcare managers.
- Detailed appendices that include resources for learning more about healthcare management; sample programs of study; job-hunting advice; frequently used terms in job advertisements; sample position descriptions; do's and don'ts of interviewing; and sample cover letters and résumés.

We hope you enjoy reading this book as much as we enjoyed bringing it together. At every step along the way, we asked ourselves, "What did I need in the classroom when I started teaching—and didn't have?" May you and your students be excited by the plethora of opportunities waiting for them in the dynamic field of healthcare management, and may your graduates bring back stories for future generations.

Sharon B. Buchbinder, RN, PhD  
Towson University

Jon M. Thompson, PhD  
James Madison University

# Foreword

*Quint Studer*

Thank you for writing a “how-to” book. The healthcare field tends to attract many books that have value in reference to why something needs to be done. There are countless books on what needs to be done. Even books on who should do it. So with all these books covering the why, what, and by whom, why is it we do not have consistent excellence in health care? Yes, we have those pockets of excellence, such as the great Heart Institute or an organization at the top of its specialty for a period of time, but few organizations gain and sustain that excellence.

So what is the vital factor in making health care’s future bright? Lives depend on it. The field is attracting, developing, and recruiting talent. This, combined with the right position, will create great health care. This book facilitates the above and more.

I like the way the book is organized. Chapter 1 is the diagnosis. Using healthcare terms, how can we make the right selection and create the right treatment plan without the right diagnosis? I love the Healthcare Management Talent Quotient Quiz. After completing a diagnostic workup, the next step is to investigate the best treatment to maximize the patient’s outcome. The goal and far reaches of this book are to maximize our human potential. Chapter 2 guides the reader through this investigation. Chapter 3 allows the reader to dig deeper into this research and develop his or her own educated treatment plan to see what setting will fit his or her passion and potential. Chapter 4 brings the reader to closure in this investigation with the profiles of people who are already in the field.

Health care is blessed in that people with great passion are attracted to this field. *Career Opportunities in Health Care Management: Perspectives from the Field* helps guide this passion so that the reason why someone enters this career is not lost: making a positive difference in the lives of others.

Thank you, Dr. Buchbinder and Dr. Thompson, for writing this book, which will make health care better.

Quint Studer  
Founder and CEO  
The Studer Group  
Gulf Breeze, Florida



# Foreword

*Leonard H. Friedman*

I would like to begin this foreword with a brief story that speaks clearly as to why healthcare management as a career is so important and absolutely vital to the health of both individuals and communities. Several years ago, one of my colleagues suffered a heart attack. His heart attack was so severe that when he was admitted to the emergency department of the local hospital in our community and an angiogram was performed, it was determined that all five main coronary arteries needed to be replaced right then. Fortunately, the local hospital had recently built a heart center and staffed it with two experienced cardiac surgeons along with the other staff and equipment needed to perform coronary artery bypass graft surgeries. The quintuple bypass was performed that evening and my colleague survived.

Some months later, I saw him at one of the local coffee shops and I asked him how he was doing, at which time he shared something with me that I have never forgotten. He told me how in the days and weeks after his surgery, he discovered why healthcare management is so important. When I asked him to elaborate, he mentioned that had the CEO and board of the local health system not made the decision to build the heart center, he would have certainly died given that the next closest hospital with the staff and facilities to do heart surgery was 45 miles away. The vision and wisdom of that system CEO saved the life of my colleague.

There is absolutely no question that healthcare organizations need highly skilled and dedicated clinicians to deliver the kind of safe and effective care that each and every person needs and deserves. Whether that person is a physician, nurse, therapist, technologist, or other direct or indirect caregiver, health care is absolutely dependent on these amazing people. However, equally amazing is the role that healthcare management plays in creating and sustaining the systems that allow clinicians and caregivers to do their very best work. Without healthcare managers at all levels of their

organizations, the actual delivery of care would be severely compromised. Think about the breadth of what healthcare managers do including:

- Craft a vision for what their organization can become
- Identify healthcare needs in the community and bring the right resources to address those needs
- Manage complex businesses that are often the largest part of the economy in many communities
- Lead at all levels of their organizations
- Manage relationships with multiple stakeholder groups

Healthcare management is not a career for persons who want a smooth and steady job that stays the same from one day to the next. Persons in this field not only have to be comfortable with change, they have to be change agents—creating an intentional future and continually motivating others toward that future. Healthcare managers have to be stewards of the financial, technical, and human resources for which they are responsible. Above all else, healthcare management is a people business. The best healthcare managers are those who understand that relationships truly matter. They think clearly and listen carefully. They are action-oriented people who also take the time to think through the consequences of their options. They know in their core that healthcare management is about service to others—people who use their services (let us call them “patients” for a moment) and are very frequently sick, vulnerable, and frightened. Healthcare managers have an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of patients, their families, and their communities.

My hope is that as you go through this superb book, you will think about what healthcare management does. Read the stories of those who have dedicated their lives to this career and you will understand why healthcare managers make such a profound difference in their organizations and the communities they serve. As you go through the book think about my colleague who would not be alive today were it not for a wise and forward-thinking healthcare executive. This is truly a career in which you can make a significant difference and touch the lives of persons in ways you might not have thought possible.

Leonard H. Friedman, PhD, MPH  
Professor and Director  
The George Washington University  
Department of Health Services Management and Leadership

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# About the Authors

## **Sharon B. Buchbinder, RN, PhD**

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*Professor and Chair*

*Department of Health Science*

*Towson University*

Over the past three decades, Dr. Buchbinder has worked in many aspects of health care as a clinician, researcher, association executive, and academic. With a PhD in Public Health from the University of Illinois School of Public Health, she brings this blend of real-world experience and theoretical constructs to undergraduate and graduate face-to-face and online classrooms, where she is constantly reminded of how important good teaching really is. She also conducts healthcare management research and provides relevant and effective service to her department, college, university, and discipline, and is immediate past chair of the board of the Association of University Programs in Health Administration (AUPHA).

## **Jon M. Thompson, PhD**

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*Professor and Director*

*Health Services Administration Program*

*James Madison University*

Dr. Thompson holds his PhD in Health Services Organization and Research from the Medical College of Virginia/Virginia Commonwealth University. He has significant experience as a practitioner, having served as a marketing and public relations administrator at a large, hospital-based health system, and as a consultant to various health services organizations. He is an active researcher, and has published widely and presented at national meetings on diverse administrative subjects including managed care, quality, hospital operational and financial performance, human resources and healthcare teams, and healthcare marketing. In

addition, he has held leadership roles in several national professional health services organizations. He has taught at both the undergraduate and graduate level in healthcare management.



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And, finally, and never too often, we thank our spouses, Dale Buchbinder and Suzanne Gilchrist-Thompson, who listened to long telephone conversations about the book's progress, and tolerated our late-night and weekend hours on the computer, frantic e-mails, and faxes. We love you and could not have done this without you.

