

## TOP 12 HEALTH CARE JOBS: BUT WHY DOES THE TOP RANKED JOB PAY LESS THAN THE LAST?



Amongst all of the gloomy information that the Bureau of Labor Statistics regularly churns out, one that consistently brings good cheer, is its touting of the potential and prospects of the health care and social assistance industry as prospective job generators. The department keeps saying that health care will bring lots of jobs and said that of all the new jobs that were created and will be created in the decade between 2010 and 2020, the health care and social industry will be responsible for more than a quarter of them, 28 percent to be precise. In job terms it translates to 5.7 million new jobs. Moreover it says that health care wages and salaries will also increase by as much as 27 percent through 2014. For all those job aspirants who would like to enter a field in this industry what are the options available and which are the ones you should opt for? Before you do that consider three aspects. Are you interested in going for an advance degree that will open more options? Are you willing to take on the huge student debt that you will have to bear if you go for advanced degrees or an M.D.? Moreover, you also have to take into account your goals, skills and interests. CareerCast, a job search site has compiled a list of a dozen jobs it considers to be amongst the best in health care. Apart from mentioning what the job entails, it also tells how much you are likely to earn in the respective jobs. Leading the pack is dental hygienist, which pays a median of \$68,000, which is well below the median salary of the general practice physician, which is ranked ninth, yet fetches \$205,000 or the last on the list, psychiatrist, at no. 12, which pays \$164,000. Why is that the best job on the list pays so little? It is a blend of features that ranks it on top. The salary is healthy, it is predicted to grow by 38 percent over the next 8 years, work is low stress, as dental hygienists work at their own pace and have flexible timings. Moreover, they work in relaxed, air-conditioned surroundings and job security is high. Furthermore, a two-years associate's degree is all that is required to become a dental hygienist. CareerCast publisher Tony Lee explained how the rankings were done. Apart from looking at its income and hiring outlooks, they looked at the work environment, how comfortable it was, did it entail working in hazardous conditions? Were stress factors like meeting deadlines, competitiveness, being away from the family for long periods and constant travel part of the package? Merely having a robust salary did not automatically push the job to the top of the rankings, these other attributes were also considered. Audiologists were ranked second, primarily because they are normally entrepreneurial positions where schedules are flexible and practitioners work by themselves without having to answer anyone. Moreover, it is predicted that many audiologist openings, are contributing to a strong hiring outlook and it is likely to grow by 37 percent by 2020. The third ranked job, occupational therapist, is like dental hygienists and audiologists, low stress, flexible schedules and they get to determine just how much work they want to do. In comparison much high median jobs, like general practice physicians and psychiatrists rate lower, at no. 7 and no. 12 respectively because they work under extreme pressures and have to sacrifice on their social lives as their work cannot be relegated to fix time schedules. They have to be prepared against litigation and buy expensive malpractice insurance. Lee says, "There is a lot of stress that comes with having people's lives in your hands." he says. While the stress level for dental hygienists is just 12.09, for psychiatrists it's 24.5 and for physicians, 25.29. Choosing a career is a highly individual matter, but it would be well to look beyond high incomes and mull on the stress factor and work environments as well – after all job satisfaction and happiness is also an income. It is just that you cannot count it, the way you can money.