

## Title:

Experts Say the Allied Health Work Force Is in Jeopardy

## Word Count:

309

## Summary:

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## Keywords:

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## Article Body:

From rising health care costs to an increase in the number of Americans who lack health insurance coverage, there are many health care issues that are attracting considerable attention in Congress.

However, some say there's one key dimension that fails to receive sufficient notice: the adequacy of the allied health care work force. Apart from doctors, nurses and pharmacists, these professionals are the personnel engaged in patient care in hospitals. They also work in a wide range of other health care settings.

An increase in demand, retirements, technology advances and other opportunities for allied health graduates have placed a strain on the educational pipeline. According to the Association of Schools of Allied Health Professions, an organization representing allied health education in the U.S., a vivid illustration of this disturbing trend may be found among the allied health professions.

Currently, many sectors within the allied health professions are vulnerable. For example, although a high proportion of all treatment furnished in a hospital is accompanied by medical laboratory tests, the medical technologists who perform these procedures are experiencing a personnel shortage that is just as severe - if not worse than - what afflicts the national nurse shortage.

As a means of addressing the situation, ASAHP is working with several other organizations in the development of legislation known as S. 473, the Allied Health Professions Reinvestment Act of 2005, and H.R. 215, a companion bill. Introduced to Congress in 2005, this proposed legislation is designed to furnish

a remedy for the allied health work force problems.

If something isn't done soon, the organization warns that there will be an alarming increase in adverse events affecting patients because of an inadequate supply of allied health caregivers.

The term "allied health" was coined by the federal government in 1966, when legislation was needed to remedy severe work force shortages among health and health-related professions such as physical therapy.