Industry Spotlight: Aged care and mental health services roles on the rise

If you're looking to make your mark in an industry that's always open for business, the Healthcare & Medical sector holds many opportunities.

The aging population, along with a growing investment in mental health services and the roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme is leading to strong demand for candidates with the right blend of compassion, commitment, and technical know-how.

Over the last three months [April – June 2017], job ads on SEEK for the Healthcare & Medical industry increased by 9% when compared to the same period last year and the average advertised salary was $87,321. Opportunities for high acuity nursing increased by 4% year-on-year, while general practitioners grew by 24%, and ambulance and paramedic roles were up by 1%.

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Aged care roles on the rise

Demand for nursing roles is expected to grow in line with our aging population. Figures from the Federal Government's 2015 Intergenerational Report shows that health expenditure per person is projected to more than double over the next 40 years and around 40,000 Australians will be over the age of 100 by 2055.

The latest data from SEEK shows opportunities for aged-care nurses increased by 13% year-on-year. "There's been a huge increase in the building of residential aged-care facilities in recent years and a big demand for in-home care as the aging population continues to grow," says Dan Hobson, Director of Hobson Health Recruitment. "This

means employers are looking for qualified staff with the soft skills required to connect with clients and make a difference."

A caring culture

BlueCross is a provider of aged care facilities, in-home care, and residential nursing services in Melbourne. It has 23 aged-care residences and employs more than 2,000 people, including nurses, personal carers, hospitality staff, cleaners, clinical care coordinators, admin, leisure & lifestyle coordinators and more. BlueCross places a strong emphasis on a positive culture and looks for candidates that share its passion for making a difference in the lives of its residents and clients.

Jessica Casey, Senior HR Business Partner at BlueCross, explains that the business invests in its culture and clearly articulates its values during the recruitment process. Its culture is driven by the 'FISH! Philosophy', which is a technique that encourages people to flourish and be engaged in the workplace.

"We have four BlueCross STARFish Principles, which are 'Make someone's day', 'Be there', 'Choose your attitude' and 'Have fun'," says Casey. "I discuss these principles during interviews and I ensure that all successful candidates display and embrace these qualities which results in a great cultural fit."

Reward and recognition

Connie Fitzpatrick, Director at Frontline Health Recruitment, says demand for high-quality candidates is strong across all areas of the sector. "Healthcare is one of the hardest-working professions," she says. "The demands of the job can make work-life balance difficult to achieve and people should be recognised for the work that they put in."

BlueCross is one company that fosters a culture of reward and recognition. Employees are encouraged to acknowledge their colleagues with a STARFish Awards to their colleagues when they exhibit one of its key principles. "We also have our annual STARFish Awards that are presented at our staff conference," says Casey. "Winners receive travel vouchers of up to $5,000."

BlueCross also invests significantly in learning and development across the business. "One of our programs has a focus on succession planning through the Manager-in-Training program, which supports talented staff to transition to become a Residential

Manager," says Casey. "Successful candidates participate in a 12-month trainee and mentorship program and, upon successful completion, they're equipped to apply for Residential Manager or Assistant Residential Manager positions as they become available. The program is available to three or four people a year and we've had a really good success rate of people transitioning into Residential Manager roles."

A focus on mental health

Aged care is not the only area to experience growth across the industry. SEEK data shows opportunities for candidates in psychology, counselling and social work also rose by 40% year-on-year in June.

Hobson says this growth may be due to increased investment in mental health services. "People are more comfortable talking about mental health and seeking help, and this is leading to a growth in demand for services and for mental health workers," he says.

The Federal Government pledged to invest an additional $115 million in mental health programs, services and research in the 2017-18 Budget. "There is a much greater focus on the legitimacy of mental health today than in previous decades," adds Hobson.

Demands of the job

A career in healthcare can present physical and emotional demands for employees. It requires soft skills for effective communication and a commitment to the highest level of standards and care.

"It takes a very special person to work in the healthcare field," says Fitzpatrick. "In some cases, you may be on call 24/7. When applying for your next role, make sure you can show the employer that you really want the job and that you've researched their organisation and their culture. Take time to think about your strengths and be ready to articulate why you are committed to the industry and why you're the best at what you do."

As demand for talent in the Healthcare & Medical sector continues to grow, so too do the opportunities for you to make your mark in the industry and help improve the wellbeing of others.