

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

The Healthcare and Medical industry is one of the largest employers in New Zealand. If you're looking to make your next move in this multi-faceted sector, experts say there is healthy demand for skilled and compassionate candidates.

The latest data from SEEK Employment Trends shows that prospects in the Healthcare and Medical industry grew by 9% from April to June when compared to the same period last year and the average advertised salary was \$72,339. Opportunities for pharmacists rose by 47% while paediatric nursing was up by 19% and high-acuity nursing grew by 21%.

"We are seeing a very consistent demand across almost all areas of healthcare," says Debbie Glen, Director of Frontline Health Recruitment New Zealand. "The work can be demanding and the hours can be long but people tend to work in the industry because they are passionate about healthcare and there is no shortage of roles out there for them."

Growth in aged care

[Research from New Zealand's Ministry for Social Development](#) predicts the number of people aged 65 years and over will increase from around 550,000 in 2009 to 1million in the late 2020s. SEEK data shows opportunities in aged care grew by 8% year-on-year.

Ryman Healthcare is one of New Zealand's leading providers of retirement living options for New Zealanders over the age of 70 and it is experiencing strong growth. It employs more than 4,700 staff across its New Zealand and Australian operations, including a range of healthcare professionals, such as registered nurses and carers.

David King, Corporate Affairs Manager at Ryman Healthcare, says the business plans to open two new villages a year over the coming years. "We're expanding fast and we need kind and motivated people to help run them," he says. "We have a 'grow our own' philosophy and invest in developing our people. For those who are interested in leadership, we run a comprehensive leadership-training program so people can improve their skills and advance their careers. We also offer a staff share scheme so that our employees can share in our success."

A focus on culture

Metlifecare is also a provider of aged care across independent living, serviced apartments and in-home care. It employs 1,034 people in roles such as registered nursing and caregiving for the elderly. Huma Houghton, General Manager of HR at Metlifecare, says a strong focus on culture helps to attract the best talent.

“Part of the Metlifecare culture is to ensure people feel empowered and free to choose how they want to make a difference in their day-to-day roles within our overarching customer service principles,” she says.

Houghton explains the customer-focused culture is instilled from day one. “In our orientation program, we work hard to put our employees in our customers' shoes. We do a visualization exercise and show videos to help bring to life what it's like to be a 75-year old whose partner has passed away, who is fragile and who has a diminished ability to do things for themselves. We also actively engage our employees and encourage them to share their ideas of how we can improve.”

Investing in mental health

A greater focus on mental health is also leading to more opportunities for skilled healthcare candidates. The latest data from SEEK shows opportunities psychology, counselling and social work rose by 31% year-on-year.

The New Zealand Government recently dedicated [\\$100 million](#) from its \$321m social investment program to fund early intervention trials for mental health. Glen says this may lead to an increased demand for talent.

“We expect to see more roles created in mental health services,” she says. “Employers will be looking for people with experience and a genuine passion for improving people's wellbeing. It's demanding work, like all areas of healthcare.”

Skills in demand

Employers in the Healthcare and Medical industry are looking for candidates with highly developed communication skills as well as technical qualifications and a genuine sense of compassion.

“At Metlifecare, we look for people with empathy and compassion for older people,” says Houghton. “Some people just don't have an affinity for the elderly but we need people who are comfortable around older people and are resilient because it can be challenging work.”

Glen says employers across the industry look for candidates with a passion for learning. “Make sure you keep your CV up-to-date with your professional development because employers want to see that you are invested in your career,” she says.

As demand for skilled healthcare workers continues to grow in line with the aging population, there are more opportunities for you to make your mark in this diverse industry.