# No pause in health care jobs machine - yet

Mass Device

The job market is dismal. Nearly a million public employees have lost their jobs over the last two years. Construction remains severely depressed, and millions of Americans are laboring at lower pay because they're stuck in jobs far below their qualifications.

Yet one sector boasts nothing but blue skies. Health care added 32,800 new jobs last month, just as it added new jobs every month without fail for the past 20 years. Physician offices led the way with 9,900 new slots in May, followed by 5,500 new jobs at nursing homes.

In a month when the economy added just 69,000 new jobs overall, the nation's health care sector, which represents 17.9 percent of all economic activity, generated nearly half of all the new employment opportunities. If the rest of the economy had added positions at the same pace as health care, there would have been over 300,000 new job openings to celebrate.

None of the economic and political storms of the past quarter century – not the savings and loan collapse; not the 1993-94 health care reform debate; not the dot.com bust; not the financial crisis and Great Recession; and not the Affordable Care Act, a.k.a. Obamacare – has fazed the Great American Health Care Jobs Machine. Though new jobs are a good thing, few cheer the health care sector's never-ending upward march. "It is tempting to think that rising health care employment is a boon," Harvard professors Katherine Baicker and Amitabh Chandra wrote in last week's New England Journal of Medicine. "But if the same outcomes can be achieved with lower employment and fewer resources, that leaves extra money to devote to other important public and private priorities such as education, infrastructure, food, shelter, and retirement savings."
The latest projections from economists at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services suggest the growth will keep pace with the rest of the economy for two more years. But then it will resume growing faster than GDP. With or without Obamacare, health care will grab nearly 20 percent of the economy by 2021, meaning it will remain a major source of employment opportunities for millions of job seekers.

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