

# BC3's first patient care tech certificate program to address regional shortage

April 2, 2018

(Butler, PA) Butler County Community College in August will launch its first patient care technician certificate program, a nine-month course created in response to a regional and national shortage of those able to provide basic nursing care under the supervision of a licensed nurse and one whose graduates may earn on average \$26,590.

Students completing BC3's program will have earned American Medical Certification Association certifications in patient care, phlebotomy and EKG technician, and enter a nursing assistant marketplace expected to see an increase in jobs of 11 percent through 2026, according to the U.S Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

"On a scale of 1 to 10," Jodi Rodgers, executive director of Elmcroft Senior Living, Saxonburg, said of the need for those with the certifications, "I would say 9.5."

Kiley Cribbs, coordinator of emergency medical services and police training programs at BC3, said the cross-trained graduates "can work anywhere.

"When they have the phlebotomy and the EKG certification, with the patient care technician certification, it makes them more marketable," Cribbs said.

BC3's patient care technician certificate program will be held on BC3's main campus in Butler Township from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays and-or Thursdays from Aug. 15 through May 23, 2019. Instruction will be delivered in 290 hours of a traditional classroom setting, online and through labs; and through 220 hours of clinical experience, Cribbs said.

## "The first person you would look at"

Graduates will be prepared to obtain entry-level positions in hospitals, clinics, rehabilitation centers, physicians' offices, long-term care units and in home-health occupations, Cribbs said.

"They will learn how to draw blood and obtain the samples correctly," Cribbs said. "They would learn how to place electrodes on a patient's chest, and accurately obtain the footprint of what their heart is doing. They would also be doing the duties of what your traditional CNA trainee encompasses – patient bathing, dressing, vital signs and some medication administration."

Said Rodgers: "I think they would be the first person you would look at and somebody you would want on your team because they have more education than most people would have."

Kelly McKissick, BC3's coordinator of professional education and certificate programs, said her online research of job openings for those with the patient care, phlebotomy and EKG certifications showed "pages and pages of them coming up at a time."

"If you look in the newspapers, at who is looking to hire, you are going to see personal care, you are going to see skilled care, you are going to see hospitals," Rodgers said. "They are doing open interviews. Sign-on bonuses. We all are."

Beth Herold, a registered nurse and director of the Butler County Area Agency on Aging, and Rodgers were among members of a BC3 advisory board that worked with Cribbs and McKissick to establish the program.

"There were people from different walks of life, but all in health care," Rodgers said. "And I think when BC3 realized there was a definite need, they responded rather quickly."

The graduate who is certified in phlebotomy and EKG is that much more employable, Herold said.

"You can move them around to different units," she said. "They can take on different tasks in the hospital, and that's what enticed me for encouraging younger students who are in high school or are not sure what they want to do to take the program at BC3. It is not that expensive. You can see if that is something that you like and whether that is your passion. And then you can continue into BC3's nursing program or maybe that is your calling and you are satisfied that that is what you want to do."

## BC3 certificate programs "can get you a livable wage"

Tuition for the program is \$5,999, which does not include textbooks and scrubs. Funding may be available through CareerLink and Career T.R.AC.K. for eligible students, McKissick said. A student loan available for professional certification programs can be pursued through SallieMae.

The median annual wage for nursing assistants was \$26,590 in May 2016, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. The highest average salary for nursing assistants was \$31,990 for those who worked in government positions, followed by \$28,540 for those employed by hospitals. Those in skilled nursing facilities earned on average \$25,670.

"These certificates and programs that BC3 offers can get you a livable wage when you don't maybe know exactly what you want to do," Herold said, "and you may find that that is the thing that will bring you the most prosperity in your future."

Applicants must also possess a valid driver's license and health insurance, or a signed waiver. They must also complete a physical that includes lab work and have current immunizations.

Students must also successfully complete a drug screening and certified background check.

For more information, contact McKissick at 724-287-8711 Ext. 8171 or email [Kelly.McKissick@bc3.edu](mailto:Kelly.McKissick@bc3.edu).