

Improved Economy And Obamacare Boost The Demand For Travel Nurses

BY PHIL GALEWITZ
 Kaiser Health News

With her children grown and husband nearing retirement, Amy Reynolds was ready to leave behind snowy Flagstaff, Ariz., to travel but she wasn't ready to give up her nursing career.

She didn't have to. For the past three years, Reynolds, 55, has been a travel nurse — working for about three months at a time at hospitals in California, Washington, Texas and Idaho, among other states. Her husband accompanies her on the assignments. "It's been wonderful," she said in May after starting a stint in Sacramento. "It's given us a chance to try out other parts of the country."

Reynolds is one of thousands of registered nurses who travel the country helping hospitals and other health care facilities in need of experienced, temporary staff.

With an invigorated national economy and millions of people gaining health coverage under the Affordable Care Act, demand for nurses such as Reynolds is at a 20-year high, say industry analysts. That's meant Reynolds has her pick of hospitals and cities when it's time for her next assignment. And it's driven up stock prices of the largest publicly traded travel-nurses companies, including San Diego-based AMN Healthcare Services and Cross Country Healthcare of Boca Raton, Fla.

"We've seen a broad uptick in health care employment, which the staffing agencies are riding," said Randle Reece, an analyst with investment firm Avondale Partners. He estimates the demand for nurses and other health care personnel is at its highest level since the mid-1990s.

Demand for travel nursing is expected to increase by 10 percent this year "due to declining unemployment which raises demand by increasing commercial admissions to hospitals," according to Staffing Industry Analysts, a research firm. That trend is expected to accelerate, the report said, because of higher hospital admissions propelled by the health law.

Improved profits-particularly in states that expanded Medicaid-have also made hospitals more amenable to hiring travel nurses to help them keep up with rising admissions, analysts say.

At AMN Healthcare, the nation's largest travel nurse

company, demand for nurses is up significantly in the past year. CEO Susan Salka said orders from many hospitals have doubled or tripled in recent years. Much of the demand is for nurses with experience in intensive care, emergency departments and other specialty areas. "We can't fill all the jobs that are out there," she said.

Northside Hospital in Atlanta is among hospitals that have recently increased demand for travel nurses, said David Votta, manager of human resources. "It's a love-hate relationship," he said. From a financial viewpoint, the travel nurses can cost significantly more per hour than regular nurses. But the travel nurses provide a vital role to help the hospitals fill gaps in staffing so they can serve more patients.

Northside is using 40 travel nurses at its three hospitals, an increase of about 52 percent since last year. The system employs about 4,000 nurses overall.

Historically, the most common reason why hospitals turn to traveling nurses is seasonal demand, according to a 2011 study by accounting firm KPMG. Nearly half of hospitals surveyed said seasonal influxes in places such as Arizona or Florida, where large numbers of retirees flock every winter, led them to hire traveling nurses.

Though there have been rare reports of travel nurses involved in patient safety problems, a 2012 study by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania published in the *Journal of Health Services Research* found no link between travel nurses and patient mortality rates. The study examined more than 1.3 million patients and 40,000 nurses in more than 600 hospitals. "Our study showed these nurses could be lifesavers. Hiring temporary nurses can alleviate shortages that could produce higher patient mortality," said Linda Aiken, director of the university's Center for Health Outcomes and Policy Research. The study was funded by the National Institutes of Health and the American Staffing Association Foundation.

The staffing companies screen and interview nurses to make sure they are qualified, and some hospitals, such as Northside, also make their own checks. Nurses usually spend a couple days getting oriented to a hospital before beginning work. They have to be licensed in each state they practice, although about 20 states have reciprocity laws that expedite the process.

Oz And Roizen

Promoting Healthy Environment Can Achieve Healthy Results

BY MICHAEL ROIZEN, M.D., AND MEHMET OZ, M.D.

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A funny thing happened last year when a bunch of first-through third-grade kids walked to school: Their parents lost weight! The children were part of an obesity-prevention program designed by nutritionists at Tufts University and the community of Somerville, Massachusetts, called Shape Up Somerville. The program consisted of overhauling school lunches, teaching kids about nutrition in school, increasing in-school and after-school physical activity programs and sending out newsletters to their family with health tips, recipes and healthy-food coupons. (Healthcorps — the foundation founded by Dr. Oz and his wife, Lisa, with help from Dr. Roizen — works with high-school kids to do the same.)

What the researchers found was that as the kids shaped up, it got the attention of their parents, and changed their lives, too. When the parents got involved with healthier eating and recreational activities for their children, they started buying healthier food and snacks for home, and supported city bike lanes, walking paths and other community health programs. The result? BMIs for moms and dads decreased more than their kids' did, and the parents went from being overweight to a healthy weight!

The lesson for public health efforts, say the Tufts researchers, is that when you improve children's health, you also can make their parents more committed to healthy habits. The lessons for Mom and Dad? If you work to lose weight and improve your health as a family team by shopping for healthy foods, taking regular walks and getting active together, you'll get results.

PREVENTING TEEN DISTRACTED DRIVING

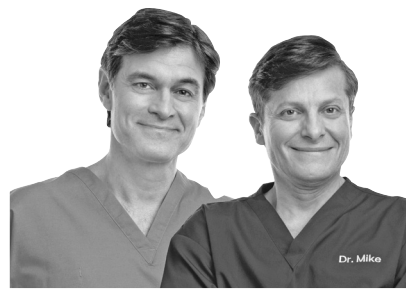
Werner Herzog, acclaimed director of films like "Grizzly Man" and "Rescue Dawn," made a 30-minute documentary called "From One Second to the Next" that tells four stories about people whose lives were changed forever or taken away by a driver who was texting.

It's tough to watch, but that's the point — and one that you, Mom and Dad, have to make to your teenagers so they NEVER text (or talk on the phone) while driving. Car accidents are the No. 1 accidental cause of death among teens. Texting while driving makes it 24 times more likely that your kid will be involved in an accident. By the way, that applies to parents too.

Unfortunately, scare tactics and in-depth conversations don't always work. That's why researchers at the University of Washington's Harborview Injury Prevention & Research Center explored more effective ways to protect teen drivers from distracted driving.

Using two available technologies — an in-vehicle camera that's triggered by hard braking, fast cornering or an impact; and a device that blocks cellphone calls/texts while the car is on — they tracked 29 teen drivers for six months. In the groups using those devices, high-risk incidents and accidents were slashed by 80 percent; the call blocker was slightly more effective than the video.

Our suggestion? Watch Herzog's



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Dr. Mehmet Oz and Dr. Michael Roizen

documentary with your teen (Google the title to find it online), talk about the risks of distracted driving and consider installing a call blocker. It can save lives and keep your teen (and you — admit it, you sometimes break the rules, too!) from making a terrible mistake.

AVOIDING 21ST-CENTURY HAZARDS WHILE YOU'RE PREGNANT

"Can you hear me now?" When actor Paul Marcarelli uttered that phrase — over and over and over again — in a mobile phone company ad, we're pretty sure he never thought the question should be directed at pregnant women and their fetuses. But that's what researchers from Wyckoff Heights Medical Center in New York City wondered about. So they tracked 28 obstetrics and gynecology residents, all of whom were in their third trimester and carried beepers or cellphones near their fetus's head.

Preliminary findings, presented at the 2015 American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists meeting, were that a cellphone's ringing, beeping and buzzing startle a fetus and disrupt its sleep patterns. (The researchers pointed out that studies of pregnant women who live near airports have found that aviation noise also startles fetuses.)

Over time, around 60 percent of the fetuses toned down their reaction to the cellphones, even as the researchers made the noise more frequent, but that doesn't mean the sounds don't continue to change normal fetal behavior. The scientists' advice to pregnant women: Keep cellphones as far away from your belly and the fetus's head as possible.

Another finding from the same meeting: While pregnant, e-cigs are NOT safer than smoking tobacco cigarettes, according to researchers from the University of Maryland. The nicotine they (usually) contain alters brain development in a growing embryo, and some e-cigs contain heavy metals that can be harmful. Even the American Vaping Association says pregnant women shouldn't vape.

POWER YOUR GIRLS WITH POTASSIUM

Gamora (Zoe Saldana) in "Guardians of the Galaxy" and Black Widow (Scarlett Johansson) in "Avengers: Age of Ultron" are female superheroes who, we'd guess, are fueled by a potassium-rich diet. Gotta be, to keep their cool and have such grace and strength.

Potassium definitely is a superhero among nutrients. It builds muscle strength, and that, in turn, builds stronger bones. A study in *Bone* shows that a 10 percent boost in muscle strength in kids just 6 years old can

postpone osteoporosis decades later by up to 13 years. Another study in *JAMA Pediatrics* found that young girls who get the most potassium (2,400 mg a day or more) are far more likely to have healthy blood pressure as they get older. And making sure potassium levels are healthy may help prevent diabetes.

The recommended intake for girls 9 and older is between 4,300 and 4,500 mg daily. But few get that much, because 40 percent of the average North American teen's diet is filled with empty calories from soda, fruit drinks, dairy desserts, pizza and solid fats.

So if you want your girls to grow up to be superwomen, make sure they get plenty of potassium-rich foods. The top 10 sources: beet greens, Swiss chard, spinach, bok choy, beets, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, cantaloupe, tomatoes and asparagus. Other good sources: raspberries, strawberries and watermelon. There's got to be some items on that list your kid likes! And a smoothie is always a great way to blend some super-nutrients into a teen's diet.

MEASLES VACCINE PROVIDES BIGGER BENEFITS

In the home of the (not-so-distant) future, when you hook up your Tesla Powerwall stationary battery (for around \$3,500) to the solar panel on your roof, you might get more than you bargained for. Not only will you save money on your electric bill for heating and air conditioning (and hopefully on the cost of recharging your electric-powered vehicle), you'll also get the added bonus of reducing your carbon footprint, which means a healthier environment for everyone.

Similarly, a new study reveals that you get a lot more than you bargained for when you give your child a measles vaccine. Not only does the MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine protect against measles, it also prevents damage the virus causes to immune system memory cells. That damage makes children vulnerable to life-threatening infections for two to three years after they recover from the rash, high fever and dry cough. (We used to think the weakened immune system could recover in a few months.) And researchers who conducted the study speculate that in the days before the vaccine was introduced (1963), long-term immune system damage caused by the measles was associated with 50 percent of all childhood deaths from other infections.

As more and more states contemplate mandatory vaccination (because of recent measles outbreaks), this is one more piece of evidence that suggests parents should voluntarily — and gladly — get the MMR vaccine for their kids. Not only will they dodge the measles, it protects them from other diseases, such as pneumonia, diarrhea and bronchitis.

Mehmet Oz, M.D. is host of "The Dr. Oz Show," and Mike Roizen, M.D. is Chief Wellness Officer and Chair of Wellness Institute at Cleveland Clinic. To live your healthiest, tune into "The Dr. Oz Show" or visit www.sharecare.com.

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Ramblin's with Coach Rozy

Shorter Cardio Workouts Can Produce Bigger Results

BY MARK ROOZEN, M.D., CSCS,*D, NSCA-CPT, FNSCA

We've all been there. We WANT to get in a training session. We WANT to start a workout program. We WANT to get some cardio in to assist in dropping those pounds to help with our diet. The problem is we just don't have the time to find an hour or more to "get in a workout session." If you think you don't have the time to do some cardio or other training, think again. In just 20-30 minutes you can have a highly effective routine done. The secret? Intervals and Tabata training.

With these type of training protocols, you alternate short bursts of high-intensity exercise with low-intensity recovery and rest periods.

INTERVAL TRAINING

Intervals will increase your fitness level and burn more calories over a short period of time then doing a slow and rhythmic cardio workout. Studies have found that doing the same movement at low intensity for a whole workout is far less effective than doing interval training.

Think about some folks you know that go to the gym, get on the treadmill or other cardio equipment, and are

there three, four or even five days a week. They are going for an hour (or longer), reading their book or magazine, and "getting their sweat on." So ask yourself, "Are they the leanest, most fit person you see in the gym?" Most the time they are not. By throwing more effort into your workout, with the correct training method, you'll see better results faster.

Some benefits of interval training:

1. You can vary the length of work and recovery times to fit any fitness level. You can do this if you're an elite athlete or a beginner.
2. You burn more calories.
3. You get out of a training rut with doing the same thing over and over again.
4. You can start right away. You might need to start slow — but you can incorporate into your program at any time.

Example of a Fat-Burning Interval Routine: (Think Level 1 is sitting on the couch watching TV and Level 10 is running as fast as you possible can. Levels 4-5 would be a slow, easy paced jog, levels 7-8 would be running, at an even pace, but pushing yourself.)

- A. Warm up for 5 minutes at Level 4-5 (jog).
- B. Start with 30 seconds and go at Level 6-8 (slower



Mark ROOZEN

run to good running pace).

C. Follow up with 30 seconds at a Level 5, or below (go into a slow jog or for beginners,

you can even walk for your rest interval).

D. Repeat B and C for 10-12 minutes for beginners, 12-16 minutes for intermediate and 16-20 minutes for advanced.

E. Cool down for 5 minutes at Level 4-5.

As you advance and get in better shape, you can increase the levels of your work, and even up your pace

during your rest period. You can also start to work on going longer during your work phase, bumping up to 45 seconds, then up to a minute.

TABATA TRAINING (THIS IS A FORM OF INTERVAL TRAINING — BUT AT A HIGH LEVEL).

Tabata started in 1996 with Dr. Izumi Tabata and his research on exercise. He used his training protocol on bikers and the results were so amazing the training was named after him.

At the basic level, Tabata is interval training based on a timing technique. The original is set up that after a warm-up, an individual goes for 20 seconds as hard as they possibly can. At the end of 20 seconds, you rest for 10 seconds. This cycle is

repeated eight times — or for 4 minutes. Since the beginning, it's been developed and used for:

- Running
- Walking
- Jumping Rope
- Elliptical

It's even been used for resistance training and full body workouts. An example of a resistance or full body workout would look like this: Squats for 20 seconds — rest 10 seconds Push-Ups for 20 seconds — rest 10 seconds Run for 20 seconds — rest 10 seconds Crunches for 20 seconds — rest 10 seconds REPEAT THE SERIES AND YOU HAVE ONE TABATA IN

THE BOOKS! Think Tabata might be for you? You can find free Tabata timers online and also find apps for your smart phone. What's nice about the Tabata timers is that you can use it with any interval as it allows you to set your work and rest time any way you like.

So with as little as 8 minutes in your schedule, you CAN get your cardio workout in. The good news? You won't just be "doing something better than 0," you'll see high levels of success with interval and Tabata training in your program.

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