

Patient Advocacy

WHO ARE THEY? ^{1,2}

Biotechnology companies are working to solve some of the world's most complex problems, and sometimes the work can feel massive—but, when it comes down to it, what they do every day is really about improving the lives of individual patients. That's where a patient advocacy professional comes in. A patient advocate's role within a biotechnology company is to serve as the critical connection between a biotechnology company and the patients it seeks to serve. When the company is working closely with the patients, it can more quickly understand and work to address the patients' needs. Patient advocacy professionals also work in legislative affairs and lobby on behalf of specific policy issues that impact patients' treatment options. Patient advocates may also work within hospital systems to help patients navigate treatment, especially when it's complex. If you are passionate about ensuring that everyone has access to comprehensive health care and treatment options, you might enjoy a career in patient advocacy.

WHAT DO THEY DO? ^{3,4}

Unsurprisingly, patient advocacy professionals spend their days thinking about and assisting the patients their company serves. They may meet with individuals or focus groups to hear how current treatment is going and to provide education about treatment options and alternatives. They might also meet with patients to gather information about what kind of treatments could be beneficial but are not yet available. They serve as liaisons with health professionals, administrators, and insurance companies to discuss how everyone can work together to meet patients' needs. Just as they may share information about what their company does and offers with the patient, they also need to share with the company what the patients are telling them. They must be able to effectively communicate what they are hearing from patients and help to assess how to make patients' feedback actionable. Some patient advocacy professionals even help patients arrange treatments and accompany them to medical appointments. A patient

SALARY RANGE ^{3,4}

\$35,000–\$70,000

EDUCATION/TRAINING ⁴

High school diploma

Likely a bachelor's degree or master's degree

In many cases, experience in another health-related position (e.g., nursing or hospital administration)

High degree of compassion and empathy

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advocate's days are likely to be varied, but the goal of creating the best health outcomes for patients will always be central.

JOB OUTLOOK ⁵

Patient advocacy is considered an up-and-coming field, and the whole health-care industry is one that is expected to continue to grow. As a large portion of the U.S. population, called “baby boomers,” ages, experts anticipate increased demand for health professionals across a spectrum of careers. This demand may also be driven by an increase in immigrants and increased access to health insurance, which will impact people’s ability to seek care. Patient advocates who work within pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies will also be in high demand as constant innovation enables new and life-changing treatments. Patient advocacy professionals will be the ones who help ensure these treatments are meeting the needs of those they seek to help.

HOW DO I BECOME ONE? ⁴

One unique aspect of patient advocacy is that people come to this career with many different backgrounds and varied types of experience. These includes different levels of education: some patient advocates may have only a high school diploma and some related experience, whereas others might come to the field of patient advocacy from a career like law, business, or medicine and have advanced degrees. There are now some schools offering master’s degrees in patient advocacy. Patient advocates should have some knowledge of how the health-care system works, be people-oriented, compassionate, and have excellent communication, organization, and time management skills.

1 “Patient Advocacy: An Emerging Role within Pharma and Biotechnology.” Bio NJ. <http://bionj.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/BioNJ-White-Paper.pdf>.

2 “Patient Advocacy.” Genentech. <https://www.gene.com/patients/patient-advocacy>.

3 “Patient Advocate.” Indeed Career Explorer. <https://www.indeed.com/career/patient-advocate>.

4 “How to Become a Patient Advocate.” Get Educated. <https://www.geteducated.com/career-center/detail/patient-advocate/>.

5 “Ahead-of-the-Curve Careers” U.S. News & World Report. <https://money.usnews.com/money/careers/articles/2007/12/19/ahead-of-the-curve-careers>.