



## Work in Medical and Retail — How to Do It

**You might not think that the medical field and retail sales mix, but in fact, they do. If you like sales and you like the medical field, you can get into medical sales as a pharmaceutical sales representative or as a sales representative for medical equipment. This can be one of the more exciting careers to get into, in fact.**

If you've looked into [retail careers](#) before, or you've done [retail work](#) such as [sales jobs](#) in other industries and have found them boring, you may just find it challenging and exciting to work in medical retail, namely the pharmaceutical or medical equipment industry.

As a pharmaceutical sales representative, you are employed by a drug company to inform physicians, medical technicians, and nurses about your company's products. You don't take product orders from these people, but you do inform them of your products' benefits so that doctors and other health care practitioners will be more likely to prescribe them to patients. Patients are actually the customers for these drugs, as are the patients' insurance companies.

### Job duties

In addition to the previously outlined sales process for the products you sell, you're responsible for selling these products on a really tight schedule. In fact, health care practitioners are very busy and you're going to have just a few minutes to pitch your products to them. In that time, you're going to have to be able to describe each new drug your company has available at that particular time, as well as its benefits to the health care practitioners' patients. One of the biggest things you'll do during your sales pitch is to describe how these drugs are better than older drugs, or why your company's drugs may be better than a competitor's drugs.

### Other types of medical sales jobs

Sales representatives don't just have to sell drugs if they work in the medical field, though. They may also sell equipment, such as wheelchair models, parts and accessories, portable oxygen tanks, and so on. In general, sales representatives specialize and sell just one type of product, or work for one particular pharmaceutical company as a representative for their particular line of drugs.

### Background and education

To become a salesperson in the medical field, you'll need to have at least a high school diploma, although many companies are increasingly hiring only college graduates with at least some background in science, preferably a bachelor's degree that specializes in science. If you've had two years of college, you should be able to qualify for most pharmaceutical or medical equipment jobs. These companies provide on-the-job training and select candidates based upon social and verbal skills. You'll study a company's product line intensively and then be closely supervised in the field for a period of time during your training.

### Continual "education"

Besides your on-the-job training when you first come into your job, you'll also need to keep abreast of new product developments and new developments in the medical field at large as they pertain to your company's product line on a continual basis. You will attend regular meetings to get information about new products that are coming out and must in general keep abreast of advances in medicine as they occur. Most companies offer correspondence courses on an ongoing basis, as does the Certified Medical Representatives Institute, which certifies medical sales representatives accordingly.

### Other skills necessary

To be a good medical sales representative, you'll need to be able to keep up with almost continual changes in product line and advances in the medical field. You'll also need to be personable, good with people, and good in highly stressful situations. Of course, you are responsible for making sure that health care professionals are comfortable with you and are willing to listen to you talk about your products, which means that your ability to put them at ease will only help increase your sales.



## Retail Career Feature

### Obtaining employment

When you're about ready to graduate, you can contact your college placement office for more information about becoming a pharmaceutical sales representative trainee, or you may simply be visited by someone representing various companies who come to your campus. You can also write to major drug companies and request interviews. If you're selected as a trainee for a particular company, you are guaranteed to have a job.

As you advance through your career, you may prefer to stay a representative or you may prefer to become a supervisor and train others. In some cases, you may become an administrator at your company.

### Outlook and compensation

The pharmaceutical industry is extremely competitive, so sales representative jobs are going to be highly competed for, too. That said, though, the pharmaceutical industry is among the fastest growing at present, so job outlook looks good for those who are willing to put forth the effort and are good in this type of competitive, fast-paced and sometimes stressful environment.

At least part of a sales representative's earnings come from commissions, sometimes as much as 10 to 20%. Sales representatives across the medical field earned an average of about \$60,000 as of 2004, including commissions.

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