Job losses across New Mexico and across the nation have been the focus of most economy watchers throughout the recession. Yet some sectors of the economy have managed to grow without much attention. Ambulatory heath care is one of them. Establishments in this sector are primarily engaged in the independent practice of general or specialized medicine, or surgery.

Employment in this sector has experienced steady growth for some time. Since 2001, employment has grown from 27,950 to 43,340 in 2009, a 55.1 percent growth rate. From 2006 to 2007, this sector grew by 3.1 percent. A break in the data series in the first quarter of 2008 occurred for a variety of non-recession related reasons, mostly NAICS code changes, which resulted in the loss of approximately 1,500 workers from NAICS 621. However, from 2008 to the current QCEW period, New Mexico has added nearly 2,750 jobs or 6.8 percent in the ambulatory health care sector. Wages have improved as well. Workers in ambulatory heath care averaged $690 per week in 2001, and now QCEW reports the average weekly wage to be $806, well above the $724 for all industries combined.

Growth in the health care industry is directly related to population growth and aging. As the population continues to migrate from the East Coast and upper Midwest to the Mountain and West Coast states, we will continue to see growth in the health care industry. At 55.1 percent growth in ambulatory health care jobs, New Mexico ranks fourth highest among the states in the region.

What’s next for the ambulatory health care sector? Work is nearly completed on additional UNM medical facilities in Bernalillo County, and Presbyterian Healthcare Systems has started building a new facility in Sandoval County. Both locations offer increased growth potential for this sector. In the longer view, industry projections models suggest New Mexico’s ambulatory health care employment will grow from 40,170 in 2008 to 53,740 by 2018, adding about 13,600 jobs to the economy. That represents an increase of about 34 percent through 2018, well above the growth rate for the total all industries of 13.5 percent.
Regional Growth in Ambulatory Health Care Employment
2001-2009