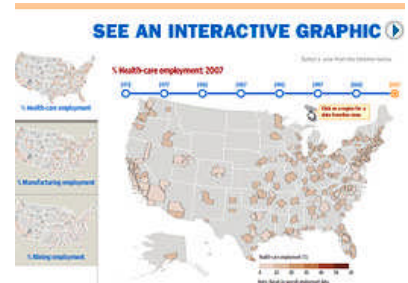


Look out for downsides of a medical economy

Posted by [Chris Seper](#) April 16, 2008 04:34AM

2007 was the year Cleveland officially switched from a manufacturing economy to a medical one.

That's the year we employed more people in the health-care sector than manufacturing, according to an [interactive graphic](#) that's part of a report in [The Wall Street Journal](#) (registration required).



Manufacturing's decline isn't news around here. Nor is the rise of our health-care sector. But the Journal's article -- discussed on the [Wall Street Journal Health blog](#) -- points out some precarious differences in a health-care economy versus one relying on manufacturing.

Cleveland-area employment changes (by percentage)

	1972	1977	1982	1987	1992	1997	2002	2007
Health care	5.86	7.22	9.18	10.14	11.03	11.02	12.75	13.55
Manufacturing	30.67	28.64	25.32	20.83	19.55	18.2	14.92	13.44

*Covers Cleveland-Elyria-Mentor area | Source: The Wall Street Journal

- It can be harder to climb the pay ladder in health care.
- The highly trained make a good living, but those without technical skills may find it harder to make a living in health care than they did in manufacturing.
- A community that becomes dependent on health jobs can end up with a weaker economy, beholden to government programs such as Medicare and Medicaid.
- While good manufacturing jobs are spread across a state, higher-paying health-care jobs tend to cluster in urban areas, around large medical centers.

We've already seen some of these results, like [specialists abandoning rural areas](#).

The Journal uses Bangor, Maine, as its example to drive home the story. Back in February, The Economist came to Cleveland to write a piece that aptly asks: What happens when a clinic takes over a metropolis?