

DELTA COLLEGE
COUNSELING/ADVISING & CAREER SERVICES
MEDICAL TRANSCRIPTIONIST

Salary Range: \$9.67 to \$19.11 per hour

Personal Interests: Word processing, accuracy and a medical environment.

Work Environment: A medical office setting, hospital, clinic or from home.

Description

Medical transcriptionists, also called medical transcribers and medical stenographers, listen to dictated recordings made by physicians and other healthcare professionals and transcribe them into medical reports, correspondence, and other administrative material. They generally listen to recordings on a special headset, using a foot pedal to pause the recording when necessary, and key the text into a personal computer or word processor, editing as necessary for grammar and clarity. The documents they produce include discharge summaries, history and physical examination reports, operating room reports, consultation reports, autopsy reports, diagnostic imaging studies, and referral letters. Medical transcriptionists return transcribed documents to the dictator for review and signature, or correction. These documents eventually become part of patients' permanent files.

To understand and accurately transcribe dictated reports into a format that is clear and comprehensible for the reader, medical transcriptionists must understand medical terminology, anatomy and physiology, diagnostic procedures, and treatment. They also must be able to translate medical jargon and abbreviations into their expanded forms. To help identify terms appropriately, transcriptionists refer to standard medical reference materials, both printed and electronic; some of these are available over the Internet. Medical transcriptionists must comply with specific standards that apply to the style

of medical records, in addition to the legal and ethical requirements involved with keeping patient records confidential.

Experienced transcriptionists spot mistakes or inconsistencies in a medical report and check back with the dictator to correct the information. Their ability to understand and correctly transcribe patient assessments and treatments reduces the chance of patients receiving ineffective or even harmful treatments and ensures high quality patient care.

Currently, most healthcare providers transmit dictation to medical transcriptionists using either digital or analog dictating equipment. The Internet has grown to be a popular mode for transmitting documentation. Many transcriptionists receive dictation over the Internet and are able to quickly return transcribed documents to clients for approval. Another emerging trend is the implementation of speech recognition technology, which electronically translates sound into text and creates drafts of reports. Reports are then formatted; edited for mistakes in translation, punctuation, or grammar; and checked for consistency and possible medical errors. Transcriptionists working in areas with standardized terminology, such as radiology or pathology, are more likely to encounter speech recognition technology. However, use of speech recognition technology will become more widespread as the technology becomes more sophisticated.

Working Conditions

The majority of these workers are employed in comfortable settings, such as hospitals, physicians' offices, transcription service offices, clinics, laboratories, medical libraries, government medical facilities, or at home. Many medical transcriptionists telecommute from home-based offices as employees or subcontractors for hospitals and transcription services or as self-employed, independent contractors.

Many medical transcriptionists work a standard 40-hour week. Self-employed medical transcriptionists are more likely to work irregular hours, including part time, evenings, weekends, or on an on-call basis.

Training, Other Qualifications

Completion of a 2-year associate degree or 1-year certificate program, including coursework in anatomy, medical terminology, medicolegal issues, and English grammar and punctuation is highly recommended, but not always required. Many of these programs include supervised on-the-job experience. Some transcriptionists, especially those already familiar with medical terminology due to previous experience as a nurse or medical secretary, become proficient through on-the-job training.

Delta College offers a Medical Transcription Specialist certificate option in its Medical Office Professions program. The American Association for Medical Transcription (AAMT) awards the voluntary designation, Certified Medical Transcriptionist (CMT), to those who earn passing scores on written and practical examinations. As in many other fields, certification is recognized as a sign of competence.

Job Outlook

Job opportunities will be good. Employment of medical transcriptionists is projected to grow faster than the average for all occupations through 2014. Demand for medical transcription services will be spurred by a growing and aging population. Older age groups receive proportionately greater numbers of medical tests, treatments, and procedures that require documentation. A high level of demand for transcription services also will be sustained by the continued need for electronic documentation that can be easily shared among providers, third-party payers, regulators, and consumers.

Earnings

Medical transcriptionists had median hourly earnings of \$13.64 in May 2004. The middle 50 percent earned between \$11.50 and \$16.32. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$9.67, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$19.11.

Related Occupations

Court reporters, secretaries, administrative assistants, receptionists and information clerks.

Medicaltranscriptionists.doc SC 10/07
Sources Delta College Catalog, Occupational Outlook Handbook.

Career Center, D 132
Bay City/Saginaw: (989) 686-9072
Midland/Auburn: (989) 495-4000, Ext. 9072
Frankenmuth, Birch Run, Reese & Vassar: (989) 758-3400, Ext. 9072
<http://www.delta.edu/careercenter>

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