

Medical Lab Technician

Over 330,000 Medical Technologists and Medical Laboratory Technicians hold jobs in the US today. Since the development of this career profession in the 1920s, Medical Laboratory Technicians have played a vital role in the diagnosis and prevention of disease.

Nature of the Work

Medical Laboratory Technicians perform less complex tests and laboratory procedures than Medical Technologists. Technicians may:

- Prepare specimens and operate automated analyzers.
- Perform manual tests in accordance with detailed instructions.
- Work under the supervision of Medical Laboratory Technologists or Laboratory Managers.

Education and Training

Medical Laboratory Technicians generally have either an associate degree from a community or junior college; a vocational or technical school; or the Armed Forces. Those technicians that learned their skills on the job must also meet the educational requirements, and the necessary semester hours of training.

Nationally recognized agencies that accredit Medical Technologist and Medical Laboratory Technician programs include the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP), the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES) and The National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences (NAACLS).

Licensure: Some states require Medical Laboratory Technicians to be licensed or registered. Information on licensure is available from state departments of health or boards of occupational licensing.

Certification: Many employers prefer applicants who are certified by a recognized professional association, such as the American Medical Technologists.

Other Skills: Employers seek Medical Laboratory Technicians with good analytical judgment and the ability to work under pressure. Close attention to detail is also essential for Medical Laboratory Technicians because small differences or changes in test substances or numerical readouts can be crucial to a diagnosis. Manual dexterity and normal color vision are highly desirable, and with the widespread use of automated laboratory equipment, computer skills are important.

Advancement: Medical Laboratory Technicians can advance and become technologists through additional education and experience. Technologists may advance to supervisory positions in laboratory work or may become chief technologists or laboratory managers in hospitals. Manufacturers of home diagnostic testing kits and laboratory equipment and supplies also seek experienced technologists to work in product development, marketing, and sales. Professional certification, specialization and/or a graduate degree in medical technology, one of the biological sciences, chemistry, management, or education usually speeds advancement.

Employment

Medical Laboratory Technicians held about 161,5000 jobs in 2012. Employment is expected to grow by 30 percent between 2012 and 2022, much faster than the average for all occupations. An increase in the aging population will lead to a greater need to diagnose medical conditions, such as cancer or type 2 diabetes, through laboratory procedures. Medical laboratory technologists and technicians will be needed to use and maintain the equipment needed for diagnosis and treatment.

Salary

The median annual wage of medical laboratory technicians was \$37,240 in May 2012. The lowest 10 percent earned more than \$24,790, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$57,710. In general, salaries are higher in a hospital setting than in physician offices.

Profession Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics:

<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/medical-and-clinical-laboratory-technologists-and-technicians.htm>