Phlebotomist

A Phlebotomy Technician (Phlebotomist) is an integral member of the medical laboratory team whose primary function is the collection of blood samples from patients by venipuncture or microtechniques. The Phlebotomy Technician facilitates the collection and transportation of laboratory specimens, and is often the patient’s only contact with the medical laboratory. The need to assure quality and patient safety mandates strict professional behavior and standards of practice for Phlebotomists.

Nature of the Work

Phlebotomists work mainly in hospitals, medical and diagnostic laboratories, blood donor centers, and doctor’s offices. The primary function of a Phlebotomy Technician is to obtain patient blood specimens by venipuncture or microtechniques. The Phlebotomy Technician aids in the collection and transportation of other laboratory specimens, and may be involved with patient data entry. A Phlebotomy Technician also draws blood for transfusions, donations and research.

Phlebotomy Technicians must like challenge and responsibility. They must be accurate, work well under pressure and communicate effectively. They must be able to deal with patients and be able to calm patients. Safety is key and all safety precautions must be taken to prevent the transmission of infectious diseases.

Duties differ by doctor office, hospital and laboratory but may include:

- Drawing blood from patients or donors in hospitals, blood banks, clinics, doctor offices, laboratories or similar facility for medical purposes
- Assembles equipment (such as needles, blood collection devices, gauze, tourniquet, cotton, and alcohol)
- Verifies or records identity of patient or donor
- Converses with patients to allay fear of procedure
- Applies tourniquet to arm, locates vein, swabs area with disinfectant, and inserts needle into vein to draw blood into collection tube. (May also prick finger instead of inserting needle.)
- Labels and stores blood container for processing
- May conduct interview, take vital signs and test blood samples to screen donors at a blood bank
- Be able to analyze information and make appropriate recommendations
**Education and Training**

A Phlebotomy Technician must have a high school diploma or G.E.D. with acceptable training. Phlebotomists typically enter the occupation with a postsecondary nondegree award from a phlebotomy program. Phlebotomy Technician programs are available at many accredited colleges and career schools. Phlebotomy Training courses at colleges or career schools vary in length and usually lead to a certificate of completion and in some cases a diploma. Almost all employers look for phlebotomists who have earned professional certification.

*Certification/Licensing:* Each individual state decides licensing requirements, but most states do not at this time. California requires all Phlebotomy Technicians to be certified and to have a state license. Employers prefer to hire experienced workers and may prefer certified applicants who have passed a national examination, indicating that the Phlebotomy Technician meets certain standards of competence.

**Employment**

Phlebotomy Technicians are in high-demand. Vacancies have increased significantly as many places need to hire three shifts of technicians. Employment of phlebotomists is projected to grow 27 percent from 2012 to 2022, much faster than the average for all occupations. Hospitals, diagnostic laboratories, blood donor centers, and other locations will need phlebotomists to perform blood work.

**Salary**

Earnings for Phlebotomists vary depending on experience, education and skill level. Phlebotomy Technicians are typically paid hourly and it varies by state, shift, schooling and experience. Typical hourly wages for a hospital are $13.50, for a private clinic: $15.90 and for a physician office laboratory: $13.00. The median annual wage for phlebotomists was $29,730 in May 2012.