

Profession Profile: Medical Technologist



AMT
American Medical Technologists
Certifying Excellence in Allied Health

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Employment of medical technologists is projected to grow much faster than the average for all occupations. Since the development of this career profession in the 1920s, laboratory professionals have played a vital role in the diagnosis and prevention of disease.

Duties

Medical technologists perform complex chemical, biological, hematological, immunologic, microscopic, and bacteriological analyses, such as:

- Analyze body fluids, such as blood, urine, and tissue samples, and record normal or abnormal findings
- Study blood samples for use in transfusions by identifying the number of cells, the cell morphology or the blood group, blood type, and compatibility with other blood types
- Operate sophisticated laboratory equipment, such as microscopes and cell counters
- Use automated equipment and computerized instruments capable of performing a number of tests at the same time
- Log data from medical tests and enter results into a patient's medical record
- Discuss results and findings of laboratory tests and procedures with physicians
- Supervise or train medical laboratory technicians



Education and Training

Medical technologists are generally required to have a bachelor's degree in medical technology or in one of the sciences (e.g., chemistry or biology). Bachelor's degree programs in medical technology include courses in chemistry, biological sciences, microbiology, mathematics, and statistics, as well as courses designed to teach knowledge and skills used in the clinical laboratory. Medical technology programs are typically offered through a university with internships in a hospital setting.

Choosing an Accredited Program

Most medical technologist programs are accredited by the National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences (NAACLS).

Licensure: Some states require laboratory personnel to be licensed or registered. Licensure of medical technologists often requires a bachelor's degree and the passing of an exam, but requirements vary by state and specialty. 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.

Advancement: Technicians can advance and become medical technologists through additional education and experience. Medical 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 medical 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.

Is It Right For You?

Employers seek laboratory personnel with good analytical judgment and the ability to work under pressure. Medical technologists in particular are expected to be good at problem solving. Close attention to detail is also essential for laboratory personnel 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.

Employment

Medical technologists held about 164,800 jobs in 2014. Employment of medical laboratory technologists is expected to grow by 14 percent between 2014 and 2024, 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 will be needed to use and maintain the equipment needed for diagnosis and treatment.

Salary

The median annual wage of medical laboratory technologists was \$61,070 in May 2016. The median wage is the wage at which half the workers in an occupation earned more than that amount and half earned less. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$41,550, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$85,160. In general, salaries are higher in a hospital setting than in physician offices.

Want To Learn More?

Visit the US Bureau of Labor Statistics:

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