

## Healthcare Practitioners and Technicians

### Medical Records and Health Information Technicians

**Medical Records and Health Information Technicians** assemble a patient's medical information which includes a medical history, symptoms, diagnostic tests, examination results, methods of treatments, and any other healthcare services provided. They also organize and maintain the medical information data by ensuring its quality, accuracy, accessibility, and security.

Technicians can specialize in many areas of health information, but two popular areas are coding and cancer registry.

- *Medical Coders or Coding Specialists* assign a code to each diagnosis or procedure performed. These codes identify the reimbursement rate that Medicare, Medicaid, or any other insurance company needs to provide for the diagnosis or procedure performed.
- *Cancer Registry Specialists* maintain databases of cancer patients at the facility, regional, and national level. They review patient records, pathology reports, and assign codes to the type of cancer, the treatment provided for the cancer, and if there were any benign tumors. Cancer registry specialists follow up with their patient's yearly in order to track the rate of treatment, survival, and recovery. This information is then used to calculate survivor rates, success rates of types of treatment, and to locate any geographic incidences of certain types of cancer.

Medical records and health information technicians are one of the few careers in the healthcare field where there is no hand-on patient contact. They work in well-lit and comfortable offices for standard 40 hour weeks.

### Education/Training

#### *How to Obtain:*

Entry-level medical records and health information technicians usually have an associate's degree. Many employers prefer to hire technicians who have a Registered Health Information Technicians (RHIT) credential. A number of organizations offer credentials typically based on passing a credentialing exam. Most credentialing programs require regular recertification and continuing education to maintain the credential.

The American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) offers credentialing as a Registered Health Information Technicians (RHIT). The Registered Health Information Technician certification requires:

- Be a graduate of an associate's degree level health information management (HIM) program that is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education (CAHIIM), or
- Graduation from a HIM program approved by a foreign association with which AHIMA has a reciprocity agreement
- Passage of the RHIT exam

Certification as a medical coding specialist is offered through several organizations, such as the American Academy of Professional Coders (AAPC) or the Board of Medical Specialty Coding (BMSC). Certification as a cancer registry specialist is offered through the National Cancer Registrars Association (NCRA). Requirements vary by organization.

To become certified as a cancer registry specialist through NCRA one must:

- Complete 160 hours of work practicum in CTR-staffed cancer registry
- Complete a NCRA accredited associate degree program OR
- Complete an associate's degree program and NCRA accredited formal education

*More Information on Certification:*

- Registered Health Information Technician:  
<http://www.ahima.org/certification/default.aspx>
- American Academy of Professional Coders:  
<http://www.aapc.com/>
- Board of Medical Specialty Coding:  
<http://www.medicalspecialtycoding.com/>
- Professional Association of Healthcare Coding Specialists:  
<http://www.pahcs.org/>
- The National Cancer Registrars Association:  
<http://www.ncra-usa.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=1>

*Average Costs:*

Registered Health Information Technician Exam: Cost ranges from \$220 - \$290, plus the cost of any exam study aids.

NCRA Maintenance Fee: \$25 - \$105.

American Academy of Professional Coders Certified Professional Coder (CPC) examination \$300

The Board of Medical Specialty Coding's Advanced Coding Professional (SCP-PM) certification exam fee: \$249 The Board of Medical Specialty Coding's Advanced Coding Specialist (ACS-PM) certification exam fee: \$325. The Board of Medical Specialty Coding recertification costs range from \$129 - \$199\*.

\*Note: Costs of continued education, certification and recertification may vary.