



Facts about the medical transcription industry

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What does a medical transcriptionist do?

Each time a patient has an encounter with a healthcare provider, this is documented in the patient's medical record. In most cases, for situations such as hospital admissions, consultations, surgeries, discharges, and clinic visits, a physician dictates a report to be filed in the patient's medical record. The medical transcriptionist converts this dictation to written form for documentation.

What is the work environment for a medical transcriptionist?

Medical transcriptionists work in medical offices, hospitals, transcription offices or at home. Medical transcriptionists sit at a computer transcribing medical reports with the aid of a foot pedal and headphones. Foot pedals allow a transcriptionist to fast forward, rewind, pause and speed up or slow down dictation.

How much can a medical transcriptionist make?

Medical transcriptionists are compensated in a variety of ways. They are paid by the hour, by production or by a combination of both. Many transcription companies also offer employee benefits and insurance programs. How much money medical transcriptionists make varies with each employer. According to the Department of Labor, the median hourly earning of a transcriptionist was \$14.40 in May of 2006. The lowest 10% earned \$10.22 per hour, which is what you may expect for a starting wage. However, if you are paid on a production based day, improving your typing speed, using keyboard shortcuts, and enlisting the help of a good word expander can help you earn more.

"Many transcription companies offer employee benefits and insurance programs."

Is there a national certification test for medical transcriptionists?

The Association for Healthcare Documentation and Integrity (AHDI) hosts two voluntary certification examinations for medical transcriptionists. The Certified Medical Transcriptionist (CMT) exam requires that you have two years of transcription experience in acute care.

The Registered Medical Transcriptionist (RMT) exam can be taken after completion of a medical transcription education program, such as the program offered by Career Step. Certification is not required to become employed as a medical transcriptionist. Some employers are even willing to pay a higher wage to transcriptionists who are certified.



According to the Department of Labor, medical transcription employment is projected to grow 14% between 2006 and 2016. This is faster than the average for all occupations. This is due to the growing and aging population, longer life spans and new treatments and procedures. Typically, older age groups require more medical tests and procedures which will then require more transcriptionists.



Myths and facts on medical transcription

Improving your typing speed, using keyboard shortcuts, and enlisting the help of a good word expander can help you earn more as a medical transcriptionist.

MYTH

Outsourcing medical transcription work overseas will decrease the demand for domestic transcriptionists.

FACT

Skilled domestic transcriptionists will still be needed since reports that have been outsourced overseas typically require editing.

MYTH

Speech recognition technology will render the job of a medical transcriptionist obsolete.

FACT

Speech recognition technology is based on the predictability of dictation. While advances have been made in speech recognition technology, it still isn't perfect. Also, it isn't utilized in most dictation systems at this point. Speech recognition is not as efficient as the human ear, especially when dealing with variables such as rapid dictation, strong accents, and alternative pronunciations. For this reason, there will always be a need for a human eye to edit these reports before they become part of a patient's medical record (which is a legal document). Even as more systems gravitate toward speech recognition, the role of the medical transcriptionist won't be eliminated; it will simply evolve into "medical editor" - identifying and editing the errors of speech recognition systems.

MYTH

EHR (Electronic Health Record) technology will replace the medical transcriptionist.

FACT

An electronic health record, or EHR, is an electronic record of patient care, and is interconnected among a wide variety of providers and facilities. While some software companies boast about the elimination of transcription to sell their products, many physicians find the system of sitting down and marking check boxes and choosing from drop-down menus to be cumbersome and difficult. The percentage of doctors' offices that have totally eliminated transcription and implemented electronic systems remains low. AHDI's stance on this topic: "It is our belief that MTs possess a highly unique skill set, a blend of medical terminology and a detailed knowledge of documentation practices that can be leveraged in the EHR environment. Early adaptation of these goals will help to position the MT as an expert in health data analysis for the future."

MYTH

Medical Transcription is a vocation that can only be successful if you can type quickly.

FACT

While it is true that medical transcription is largely based on the reliability and speed of entering information into a computer, the actual work and education of medical transcription should focus more on the language that is entered. In order to properly transcribe records, various grammar, punctuation, and medical vocabulary standards must be followed. Computer skills are also important, and building knowledge on these foundations will make anyone a better transcriptionist.