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Medical Transcription – An Emerging Profession

By Kevin Erickson

Medical Transcription is the process of interpreting and transcribing the dictation made by doctors

or other health care professionals regarding patient status, treatment procedures, diagnoses, prognoses, etc. With medical transcription of dictated data from physicians, the medical transcriptionist may also edit the text that is produced by voice recognition software. Medical Transcription is the translating of dictations made by a doctor. As a result, it requires an extensive knowledge of medical, pharmacological and anatomical terms.

In the past medical transcriptionists would listen to dictations and type it themselves, but with the dawn of technology and voice recognition software, this has become unnecessary and today, for the most part, the medical transcriptionist merely edits the output of the software. However, the editing process can range from a few corrections to major changes because voice recognition software still hasn't been perfected and probably never will be due to the wide variety of speech variations and dictating habits of health care professionals.

Aside from medical knowledge, a quality transcription requires a transcriptionist to have excellent listening skills because they must be able to simultaneously interpret dictation while typing, they must also have an exquisite knowledge of English and grammar, proofreading and editing skills, a high state of analytical skills in order to analyze and convert spoken words into meaningful writing, as well being adept in the use of transcription equipment and computers.

Medical Transcription has been seen as writing in ancient caves and in documents of lost civilizations, but still the purpose of medical transcription and the medical transcriptionist remains the same and that is to keep a record of a patient's medical status and treatment.

However, it wasn't until the late 20th century that Medical transcription was recognized as a profession. Initially, those who did medical transcription were labeled as typists, word processors, medical secretaries or dictating machine operators. This was and still is a highly unjustified job title for those who practice medical transcription because the profession requires a wide knowledge of medical terms. Thus, in 1999, Medical Transcription was assigned its own job classification and those practicing it were officially called medical transcriptionists.

Medical Transcription – An Emerging Profession

Medical Transcription as a profession is very underground and most people might not have heard about it. However, medical transcription is an essential profession in the every growing health care industry... especially to health care staff that does not have the time to put into writing every single bit of information that they gather from patients. As a result, the demand for qualified medical transcriptionist professionals is continually growing and because the number of new procedures coming into the market doctors don't have the time to transcribe all their findings.

Medical Transcription as a profession is very versatile as well. Medical transcriptionists, can acquire after a few years of education, work from medical transcription firms. Medical Transcription firms receive dictations made by doctors and in turn, these orders are turned over to medical transcriptionists to be transcribed.

A medical transcriptionist can also work full or part-time at home. Currently, the American Association

for Medical Transcription is governing body in the United states that certifies Medical transcriptionists, although you won't need a certification to be able to work as one, a certification form the AAMT, will surely increase you're "market value" and credibility.

Medical transcription is no longer merely listening and transcribing the words dictated by a doctor. Medical Transcription is evolving and now requires specific education centering on medical language, knowledge of Greek and Latin prefixes and suffixes, anatomy, physiology, disease processes, medical science and procedures, medical instruments, pharmacology, laboratory instruments, laboratory test results, medical reference material techniques and many more.

Kevin Erickson is a contributing writer for:

<http://www.total-transcription.com>

and

<http://www.eyeeon nursing.com>

and

<http://www.totalparalegal.com>

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Medical Transcriptionist – A Closer Look

By Kevin Erickson

Medical Transcription – An Emerging Profession

Medical Transcriptionist jobs have been around since doctors first took the Hippocratic Oath. Ancient cave writings indicate that records of what medical treatments were being performed have been kept for thousands of years. Back then, it was for different reasons but today, medical transcription and in particular, the medical transcriptionist profession has been quietly taking steps forward and is "suddenly" making itself known to the world.

In a nutshell, a Medical Transcriptionist transcribes dictated matter by phone or from electronically recorded messages by doctors, nurses or other health care professionals, into records of treatments, procedures and up to date patient status reports.

Surprisingly, Medical Transcription wasn't "official" recognized as a profession until 1999 when finally; the United States Department of Labor assigned the profession its' own job code, in order to monitor statistics about the field. Until that point, medical transcriptionist jobs were unjustly given the title of medical secretary or typists.

Today, the American Association for Medical Transcription, which overlooks the profession, administers testing and upon passing the test you earn the title, "Certified Medical Transcriptionist" (CMT) which lends additional credibility to your knowledge, skills and abilities over those that are uncertified. Although certification isn't required for gainful employment, CMT status certainly has its' advantages like; the assurance to your employer that you are highly qualified and this in turn, increases your "market value" as an employee.

Medical Transcriptionist take on the role of converting the spoken words, of health care professionals, into written text either as hard or soft copy. But of course, with the dawn of new technology, this task is becoming increasingly less time consuming per unit produced. A good example is the ever-increasing use of voice recognition software.

Sounds great but the questions arises, if technology is transforming the profession now, then will technology transform the profession to such an extent anytime in the foreseeable future that it more or less makes the role of humans in the profession obsolete? I think the best way to respond is by using an example. Has the technological advances in every aspect of the medical profession reduced the role and importance of doctors and nurses? The answer to that question is clear and the same applies to the field of medical transcription.

Although transcription programs continue to evolve and become more and more adapt they will never be able to replace the trained human mind. They certainly allow for aspects of the translation process to speed up but they will never be able to compensate for all the differences in diction styles like accents, grammar, pronunciation and the list is as varied as the doctors doing the dictation.

Basically, the evolving transcription software programs are simply a tool but like all tools they are only as good as the skilled craftsman using them. In fact, because of these software shortcomings, transcriptionists need to be very adept at editing; especially in the correct use of grammar and the ability to proofread. And because most transcriptions start via the recorded message listening and strong keyboard skills are becoming more and more an essential.

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Sure, voice recognition software has made the whole transcription process easier than it was in the past. Back "in the old days" when a medical transcriptionists had to listen to every single word and then transcribe it via stenograph, by long hand or more recently into a word processor but thanks to technology the editing skills mentioned above are becoming increasingly more important because voice recognition software is taking over more and more of the tedious hand entry portion of the job.

Medical Transcriptionist job training covers a wide curriculum including general knowledge of a wide variety of medical topics like medical language, Greek and Latin prefixes and suffixes, biology, anatomy and physiology body systems. A medical transcriptionist also needs to have a fair knowledge in diseases; how they progress and how they are treated because this process makes up a large portion of the medical dictations that they are responsible for transcribing.

In addition, medical science, surgery, surgical procedures and terminologies, surgical and laboratory instruments are also an important part of the transcriptionists knowledge set. And, if that's not enough prosthetics, pharmacology, laboratory test results and their interpretation must also be understood and mastered. As you can see, a medical transcriptionists knowledge base must be wide and deep.

Medical transcriptionist jobs can be applied in a variety of health care settings, either as full time employees of firms that are need of these kinds of services to doctors and other healthcare professionals or as part time transcriptionists that from home for private clients.

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Kevin Erickson is an entrepreneur and writer. For other articles he's written visit:

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