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What Constitutes a Good MT Program?

By Dawn Moreno

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How To Choose A Good Medical Transcription Training Program

Many ideas abound about what constitutes a good MT program. Some people feel that the schools that advertise on TV showing a mother working at her computer while her children play quietly at her feet is an accurate portrayal of the life of an MT. What is true and what is not true in regard to MT education is what this article shall attempt to cover.

What is AAMT and COMPRO?

The American Association of Medical Transcription (www.aamt.org) is the professional organization that represents medical transcriptionists. The AAMT has developed a competency profile for medical transcription education (COMPRO). This profile outlines many of the areas that a good solid MT program should cover. In brief, some of these areas include the following: English language, medical knowledge, technology, healthcare documentation, and professional practice. Under each of these broad headings are very particular sets of competencies that an MT student must demonstrate to show they have mastered that area. The full COMPRO guidelines are listed on the AAMT's web site, and I highly suggest that all prospective MT students visit the site and go over the profile in detail.

Why Not a Less Expensive, Faster Program?

When you take the time to research the skills that a quality MT needs, it will become evident that a shorter, less comprehensive course of study isn't going to give you what you need to succeed in the workplace. Many prospective students who look into very inexpensive fast programs buy into the idea that they can learn medical transcription quickly and then begin making good money right away. You may hear some people say that a comprehensive education is not necessary, and that you just type what you hear. This type of thinking is faulty because in medical language many words sound alike but have very different meanings. Please see the example below:

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EXERCISE: Say the following words aloud. Say them slowly and then faster:

Dysphagia (dis-phage-ee-a) – Difficulty swallowing.

Dysphasia (dis-phas-ee-a) – Difficulty speaking.

Dysplasia (dis-plas-ee-a) – Abnormality of development.

Ileum (il-ee-um) – The small intestine.

Ilium (il-ee-um) – Hip bone.

It is clear to see that without a clear understanding of the meaning of these sound-alike terms, and the medical context in which these terms are dictated, it would be very easy to type in the wrong word. Now consider the consequences of an MT typing in the wrong medication because it sounded like a different one. It is true that physician's are supposed to read the completed reports for accuracy before

signing them. However, the MT is the main person responsible for proofreading the reports. Unfortunately, the reality is that many physician's are very busy and rushed. Many times they sign reports that they read quickly. It is the job of the MT to make sure these reports are accurate.

What are the Results of Poor School Choice?

It is a fact that even if graduates of subpar programs are able to pass an employment test and get hired they have a very hard time on the job. This is because they lack a comprehensive understanding of medical language. Sure, they may know some basic anatomy and terminology; however, they lack a clear understanding of what is being said. How would this effect their potential income and job security? Well, MTs are paid based on production. In other words, most MTs are paid according to how much they are able to transcribe in a day. Most companies have minimum quotas for the amount of work they want each MT to produce in a day. If a new MT has to stop and look up every other word because they do not understand the context or content of the dictation, they are not going to be able to meet the company's minimum quotas. This happens a lot to new MTs who are poorly trained. See a comparison of two new MTs and one experienced MT and their daily production :

MT ID #: Company required daily line count Daily pay @ .07 cents
Of 1,200 lines per day: per line.

NEW MT #1– 1,250 lines done for the day. \$ 87.50

NEW MT #2– 600 lines done for the day. \$ 42.00

MT #3 - 2,000 lines done for the day \$140.00
(Has experience)

Which of these MTs would you like to be? As you can clearly see, MT #2 is not making very good money. If both MT #1 and #2 worked the same amount of hours that day, why the difference in pay? Maybe MT #2 had to stop many, many times during the day to look up simple medical words. MT #2 is not going to be very happy with her paycheck at the end of the day. Also, MT #2 is at risk of losing her

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job because she is FAR below the company's minimum production standard for the day. However, it is possible that MT #2 feels that she got a great deal on her MT education because it cost under \$1,000 and only took her 4 months to complete the entire program. MT #3 has about a year and a half of experience and is clearly making good money.

Most new MTs are hired and then put on a probation period where all of their reports are checked by an editor or quality assurance person. Most companies allow between 30–90 days for a new MT to get up to production standards in terms of production and quality. If the new MTs work is not up to company standards by that time it is likely they will be let go. This happens every day to new MTs. Being serious about getting a thorough education will avoid this problem. Investing now in a good education will assure that you can start out in the workplace ready to handle difficult dictation with ease.

What Should You Look For In A Good Program?

When looking into MT programs it is important to think about it as an investment that will pay off when you complete the program and begin working. We discussed earlier how some programs offer very short courses and only skim over subjects like anatomy, medical terminology, disease processes,

laboratory medicine, and pharmacology. Additionally, many courses do not offer comprehensive transcription practice. When evaluating programs it is important to have a base model to compare every program to. I believe a wonderful model is the AAMT's COMPRO. Look not only at what subjects the school offers but how in–depth and comprehensive do they cover each of these areas. For example, you cannot possibly thoroughly cover the subject of anatomy in a few weeks time. Medical transcriptionists deal with many different accents, medical specialties, and must have a broad based understanding of medical language. If the program you are considering does not offer comprehensive study in all of the areas discussed in COMPRO then you may want to consider that it is not a wise investment of your money. You also want to ask the following questions when deciding on a school:

1. Are the instructors experienced MT?
2. How much dictation is included in the program?
3. Is the dictation that is included authentic doctor dictated reports? Some schools offer tapes that are read by actors which are WAY too easy.
4. What type of materials will you receive in the course? Good MTs need good reference materials, and must learn to use them while in school.
5. Will you have access to an instructor who has many years of experience in this business?
6. Will you receive immediate feedback on assignments or will you have to wait weeks to hear from your instructor through the mail?
7. Does the school offer in–depth coverage of all the topics COMPRO suggests, or do they just touch lightly on these subjects?
8. Does the school offer comprehensive job placement assistance? Handing you a list of services to apply with is not considered comprehensive job placement

How Does Our Program Measure Up?

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Now the goal of this article is not to discuss why some other courses do not live up to the COMPRO guidelines but to present evidence why our course does. What does our school have to offer a prospective MT student? We offer an in-depth, comprehensive program of study including in-depth study in every single area outlined in COMPRO. Students of our program will get comprehensive study in all subject areas relating to MT.

Our program offers the opportunity to work with mentors one on one. Specifically, this means that each student will be assigned their own mentor who will work with them throughout the program. Why is this important? As an MT student, you are going to have a myriad of questions pertaining to your coursework, and a good course needs to provide you with someone who can answer those questions quickly and comprehensively. Also, learning MT is not an easy task, and many new students get frustrated and give up. We don't want to see that happen, so each of our students will be assigned their own mentor who will guide and direct them throughout their studies.

We feel that comprehensive feedback of your work is essential to your success. It is important to know what you are doing wrong and why, as well as, what you are doing right. It is very easy when checking your own work to miss many tiny mistakes. In the workplace an MT needs to work with a high percent of accuracy at between 98–99%. When MTs fall below that accuracy level, they are putting their jobs in jeopardy. In our program, you will get immediate feedback on-line after each lesson. Also, your transcription exam is HAND graded with extensive feedback, and returned within 24 hours. In other words, you will have the support of a trained instructor throughout the entire program, and this is imperative to your success.

Additionally, our course offers more transcription practice than any other program that we know of. Through our program you will transcribe over 5,000 medical reports. Why do you need to transcribe so many reports you might ask? It is our belief that practice makes perfect. Working MTs come across a variety of difficult accents and medical specialties. Without extensive hands-on practice with real world dictation, the new MT will flounder in the real work environment. Transcribing a few hundred reports may give you some idea of how it's done, but clearly is not enough practice to enable a new MT to be productive in the real world work environment ready to handle whatever is thrown at them. One reason there is such a high demand for MTs right now is because there are so many very poorly trained MTs. In fact, it is difficult to come across a well-trained MT. Good MTs have the potential of making a very good income and enjoying a lucrative career. Poor MTs usually go from job to job, then finally leave the business because they just can't reach quality or production standards. In our program we offer a great deal of real world dictation practice by real doctors. The dictation you will be transcribing comes from a variety of specialties and includes very difficult dictators. It is important to get enough practice while in school so that when you graduate, you will be able to handle the most difficult types of dictation with ease.

Our school was founded by an MTSO (medical transcription service owner) with many years of experience who also teaches medical transcription at a local community college, and who owns her own very successful MT service. The instructors of our program are highly experienced MTs and MTSOs (medical transcription service owners). This program was developed by MTs for MTs. Additionally, our program offers comprehensive job placement assistance upon graduation. Another unique feature of our program is that it promotes both professionalism and excellence

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The choice is yours. Excellence in education means making the commitment to invest wisely and choosing a school that adheres to the AAMT guidelines as outlined in COMPRO. We feel confident that we have the experience, dedication and ability to turn out MTs ready to enter the workplace capable of handling even the most difficult dictation. We wish you every success in making a quality decision for a quality education.

Dawn Moreno resides in Miami, FL and is the Director of MTACC, an on-line medical transcription school. She is married w/one Chihuahua and two cats and is pursuing her doctoral degree at this time.

Antiques vs. Collectibles

By Sharon Stajda

Finding a definitive definition for both an antique and a collectible is not possible. Just what constitutes an antique and what constitutes a collectible is determined by each individual antique dealer. Many times, the dealers will give varied answers to the seemingly simple question, "What is a collectible and what is an antique?"

Most dealers will agree that historically an antique is any crafted or manufactured item that is at least 100 years old. Collectibles are items less than 100 years old. Antiques generally are rare and worth a higher amount, while collectibles' values are more speculative and can change at a moment's notice. (This can be seen with items centered around popular television shows or movies. Some may become antiques, but normally they are collectibles that will only have value so long as that show or movie remains popular.)

Some dealers are attempting to lower the standard of an antique. They believe that items over 50 years old should be considered an antique. Those who are reputable antique dealers say the 50 years definition lowers the standard to a point that dealers can sell collectibles under the name of antiques.

However, it should be noted that the label "antique" or "collectible" has no real effect on the worth of an item. The price of an item is determined more by whether there is a demand for it. There are very rare antiques which are sold for much less than a newer collectible, but this is because there is no demand for the former and a high demand for the latter.

When it comes to purchasing items on the antique or collectible market, the buyer should do a lot of research before handing over any money. Flea markets with antique stands, antique shops, and antique malls are plentiful, so dealers have a lot of competition in stocking their shops. This can lead them to price their items much higher than their true value, which is a bad investment for you. Why buy an antique or a collectible for more than it is worth?

So, when you compare antiques to collectibles, antiques stand the test of time. Their value remains constant. Collectibles, however, are priced more on a whim and their long term value is highly speculative. Exercise caution when investing in collectibles as opposed to antiques.

For more information about antiques and collectibles, please visit the following url:

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