

Medical Records and Health Information Technicians

Summary



Health information technicians need to be able to discuss patient information and discrepancies with other professionals such as physicians and insurance personnel.

Quick Facts: Medical Records and Health Information Technicians

2012 Median Pay	\$34,160 per year \$16.42 per hour
Entry-Level Education	Postsecondary non-degree award
Work Experience in a Related Occupation	None
On-the-job Training	None
Number of Jobs, 2012	186,300
Job Outlook, 2012-22	22% (Much faster than average)
Employment Change, 2012-22	41,100

[What Medical Records and Health Information Technicians Do](#)

Medical records and health information technicians, commonly referred to as health information technicians, organize and manage health information data. They ensure its quality, accuracy, accessibility, and security in both paper and electronic systems. They use various classification systems to code and categorize patient information for insurance reimbursement purposes, for databases and registries, and to maintain patients' medical and treatment histories.

Work Environment

Health information technicians held about 186,300 jobs in 2012. Most health information technicians work in hospitals or physicians' offices.

How to Become a Medical Records or Health Information Technician

Health information technicians typically need a postsecondary certificate to enter the occupation, although they may have an associate's degree. Many employers also require professional certification.

Pay

The median annual wage for health information technicians was \$34,160 in May 2012.

Job Outlook

Employment of health information technicians is projected to grow 22 percent from 2012 to 2022, much faster than the average for all occupations. The demand for health services is expected to increase as the population ages.

Similar Occupations

Compare the job duties, education, job growth, and pay of medical records and health information technicians with similar occupations.

More Information, Including Links to O*NET

Learn more about medical records and health information technicians by visiting additional resources, including O*NET, a source on key characteristics of workers and occupations.

What Medical Records and Health Information Technicians Do



Technicians assemble patients' health information including medical history, symptoms, examination results, tests, and treatments.

Medical records and health information technicians, commonly referred to as health information technicians, organize and manage health information data by ensuring its quality, accuracy, accessibility, and security in both paper and electronic systems. They use various classification systems to code and categorize patient information for insurance reimbursement purposes, for databases and registries, and to maintain patients' medical and treatment histories.

Duties

Health information technicians typically do the following:

- Review patient records for timeliness, completeness, accuracy, and appropriateness of data
- Organize and maintain data for clinical databases and registries
- Track patient outcomes for quality assessment
- Use classification software to assign clinical codes for reimbursement and data analysis
- Electronically record data for collection, storage, analysis, retrieval, and reporting
- Protect patients' health information for confidentiality, authorized access for treatment, and data security

All health information technicians document patients' health information, including their medical history, symptoms, examination and test results, treatments, and other information about healthcare services that are provided to patients. Their duties vary with the size of the facility in which they work.

Although health information technicians do not provide direct patient care, they work regularly with [registered nurses](#) and other healthcare professionals. They meet with these workers to clarify diagnoses or to get additional information to make sure that records are complete and accurate.

The increasing use of electronic health records (EHRs) will continue to change the job responsibilities of health information technicians. Federal legislation provides incentives for physicians' offices and hospitals to implement EHR systems into their practice. This will lead to continued adoption of this software in these facilities. Technicians will need to be familiar with, or be able to learn, EHR computer software, follow EHR security and privacy practices, and analyze electronic data to improve healthcare information as more healthcare providers and hospitals adopt EHR systems.

Health information technicians can specialize in many aspects of health information. Some work as medical coders, sometimes called coding specialists, or as cancer registrars.

Medical coders typically do the following:

- Review patient information for preexisting conditions such as diabetes
- Retrieve patient records for medical personnel

- Work as a liaison between the health clinician and billing offices

Cancer registrars typically do the following:

- Review patient records and pathology reports for completeness and accuracy
- Assign classification codes to represent the diagnosis and treatment of cancers and benign tumors
- Conduct annual follow-ups to track treatment, survival, and recovery
- Analyze and compile cancer patient information for research purposes

Maintain facility, regional, and national databases of cancer patients.

Work Environment



This is one of the few health-related occupations in which there is no direct hands-on patient care.

Health information technicians held about 186,300 jobs in 2012. Most health information technicians work in hospitals or physicians' offices. Others work in nursing care facilities or for government entities. Technicians typically work at desks or in offices and may spend many hours in front of computer monitors.

The industries that employed the most health information technicians in 2012 were as follows:

General medical
and surgical
hospitals; state,
local, and private 37%

Offices of physicians 22

Nursing and
residential care
facilities 9

Government 5

Work Schedules

Most health information technicians work full time. In healthcare facilities that are always open, such as hospitals, technicians may work evening or overnight shifts.

How to Become a Medical Records or Health Information Technician



Technicians organize and maintain data for clinical databases and registries.

Health information technicians typically need a postsecondary certificate to enter the occupation, although they may have an associate's degree. Many employers also require professional certification.

Education

Postsecondary certificate and associate's degree programs in health information technology typically include courses in medical terminology, anatomy and physiology, health data requirements and standards, classification and coding systems, healthcare reimbursement methods, healthcare statistics, and computer systems. Applicants to health information technology programs increase their chances of admission by taking high school courses in health, computer science, math, and biology.

Important Qualities

Analytical skills. Health information technicians must be able to understand and follow medical records and diagnoses, and then decide how best to code them in a patient’s medical records.

Detail oriented. Health information technicians must be accurate when recording and coding patient information.

Integrity. Health information technicians work with patient data that are required, by law, to be kept confidential. They must exercise caution when working with this information in order to protect patient confidentiality.

Interpersonal skills. Health information technicians need to be able to discuss patient information, discrepancies, and data requirements with other professionals such as physicians and finance personnel.

Technical skills. Health information technicians must be able to use coding and classification software and the EHR system that their healthcare organization or physician practice has adopted.

Licenses, Certifications, and Registrations

Most employers prefer to hire health information technicians who have professional certification. A health information technician can earn certification from several organizations. Some organizations base certification on passing an exam. Others require graduation from an accredited program. Once certified, technicians typically must renew their certification regularly and take continuing education courses. Certifications include Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT) and Certified Tumor Registrar (CTR), among others. Many coding certifications require coding experience in a work setting.

Advancement

Health information technicians may advance to other health information positions by receiving additional education and certifications. Technicians can advance to a [medical or health services manager](#) after completing a bachelor’s or master’s degree program and taking the required certification courses. Requirements vary by facility.

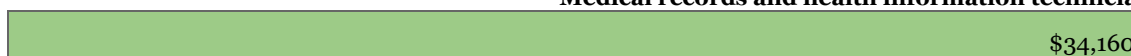
Pay

Medical Records and Health Information Technicians

Median annual wages, May 2012



Medical records and health information technicians



Note: All Occupations includes all occupations in the U.S. Economy.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics

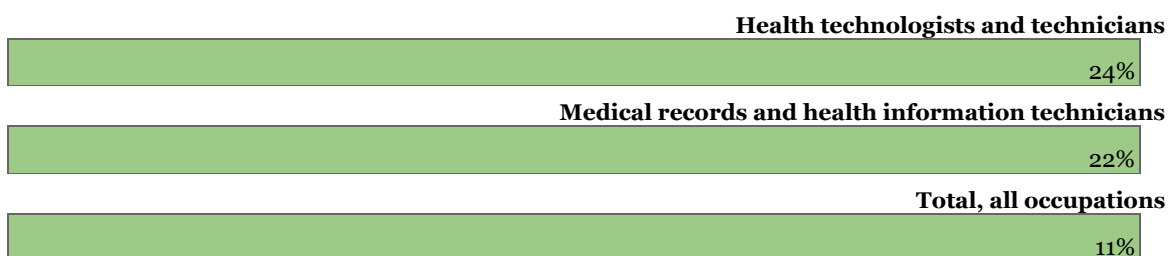
The median annual wage for health information technicians was \$34,160 in May 2012. The median wage is the wage at which half the workers in an occupation earned more than that amount and half earned less. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$22,250, and the top 10 percent earned more than \$56,200.

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Job Outlook

Medical Records and Health Information Technicians

Percent change in employment, projected 2012-22



Note: All Occupations includes all occupations in the U.S. Economy.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program

Employment of health information technicians is projected to grow 22 percent from 2012 to 2022, much faster than the average for all occupations. The demand for health services is expected to increase as the population ages. An aging population will need more medical tests, treatments, and procedures. This will mean more claims for reimbursement from insurance companies. Additional records, coupled with widespread use of electronic health records (EHRs) by all types of healthcare providers, could lead to an increased need for technicians to organize and manage the associated information in all areas of the healthcare industry.

Cancer registrars are expected to continue to be in high demand. As the population ages, there will likely be more types of special purpose registries because many illnesses are detected and treated later in life.


Job Prospects


Prospects will be best for those with a certification in health information, such as the RHIT or the CTR. As EHR systems continue to become more common, health information technicians with computer skills will be needed to use them.

Employment projections data for Medical Records and Health Information Technicians, 2012-22						
Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2012	Projected Employment, 2022	Change, 2012-22		Employment by Industry
				Percent	Numeric	
SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program						
Medical records and health information technicians	29-2071	186,300	227,500	22	41,100	[XLS]

Similar Occupations

This table shows a list of occupations with job duties that are similar to those of medical records and health information technicians.

	OCCUPATION	JOB DUTIES	ENTRY-LEVEL EDUCATION	2012 MEDIAN PAY
	<u>Medical Transcriptionists</u>	Medical transcriptionists listen to voice recordings that physicians and other healthcare professionals make and convert them into written reports. They may also review and edit medical documents created using speech recognition technology. Transcriptionists interpret medical terminology and abbreviations in preparing patients' medical histories, discharge summaries, and other documents.	Postsecondary non-degree award	\$34,020

	OCCUPATION	JOB DUTIES	ENTRY-LEVEL EDUCATION	2012 MEDIAN PAY
	<u>Medical and Health Services Managers</u>	Medical and health services managers, also called healthcare executives or healthcare administrators, plan, direct, and coordinate medical and health services. They might manage an entire facility or specialize in managing a specific clinical area or department, or manage a medical practice for a group of physicians. Medical and health services managers must be able to adapt to changes in healthcare laws, regulations, and technology.	Bachelor's degree	\$88,580

Contacts for More Information

For more information about health information technicians, including details about certification, visit

[American Health Information Management Association](#)

[American Academy of Professional Coders](#)

[Professional Association of Healthcare Coding Specialists](#)

[National Cancer Registrars Association](#)

[National Healthcareer Association](#)

For more information about medical coding and billing, visit

[Medical Coding & Billing Online](#)

For a list of accredited training programs, visit

[Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education](#)

[Medical Records and Health Information Technicians](#)

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