

Cytotechnologist

■ Job Description

Cytology is the study of the structure and function of cells. Using special techniques, cytotechnologists, prepare cellular samples for study under the microscope and assist in the diagnosis of disease by examining the samples. Cell specimens may be obtained from various body sites such as the female reproductive tract (PAP smears), the oral cavity, the lung, or any body cavity shedding cells. Examination is made of abdominal fluids, thoracic fluids, central nervous system fluids, urine, sputum, and cells obtained by brushing the surfaces of various organs. Much of the work of cytotechnologists, is done with the microscope in screening preparations of body cells for abnormalities in structure, indicating benign, infectious, inflammatory, or malignant conditions. Using the findings of cytotechnologists, the physician is often able to diagnose cancer long before it can be detected by other methods.

■ Job Settings

Most cytotechnologists work in hospitals, clinics or private laboratories under the supervision of a pathologist (a physician who specializes in diagnosing the cause or nature of disease). Some work at universities as teachers or researchers.

■ Projected Need

Nationally and in Illinois, employment of clinical laboratory workers is expected to grow about as fast as average through 2010. The number of medical tests, treatments, and procedures that are preformed each year is growing rapidly. In addition, new tests will be developed and added to the number of tests run. However, because of the increased use of automation, this increase in laboratory testing probably will not lead to an equivalent growth in employment.

In addition to the jobs created by growth, other job openings will occur as current workers retire or leave this occupation.

■ Salaries

According to a national 2000 survey conducted by the American Society for Clinical Pathology, the

median entry-level wage for cytotechnologists was \$16.70 per hour. Average hourly wage was \$21.30. Maximum salary for cytotechnologists was \$24.00 per hour.

■ Related Careers

Medical technologist; pharmacist; physician; veterinarian; dentist; medical physicist; specialist in blood banking; specialist in microbiology, chemistry, or hematology; clinical chemist (PhD); microbiologist; and microbial engineer. These careers vary in the amount and type of patient contact required.

■ Differences in Training

The usual length of a cytotechnology program is twelve months of specialized training after completing a baccalaureate degree. At least twenty semester hours of biological sciences, eight semester hours of chemistry, and some mathematics are required. This program may be linked with a community college, college, or university education.

■ Related Educational Programs

The programs of study listed below are the recommended areas of study to pursue for this occupation. Clicking on these will lead to files that show in-state and national schools that offer these programs.

The following link(s) will take you to CIS for more information. CIS requires an ID and password that can be obtained at <http://cis.ilworkinfo.com/loginhelp/> You must log into CIS prior to clicking on the links below.

[Cytotechnology](#)

■ Credentials

Although national certification is voluntary, it is strongly recommended, since certification is usually required by employers. Passing a national certification exam by an agency such as the Board of Registry of the American Society for Clinical Pathologists or the National Credentialing Agency (NCA) for Laboratory Personnel will meet the requirements for most employers. Cytotechnologists who graduate from an accredited program, complete an internship, and pass the Board of Registry exam may use the initials CT.

■ Resources

American Society of Cytopathology
400 W. 9th Street, Suite 201
Wilmington, DE 19801
Phone: 302.429.8802
<http://www.cytopathology.org>

Five awards of \$1,000 each are given annually to cytotechnology students. These awards are funded by the College of American Pathologists Foundation and administered by the society.