

Ophthalmic Medical Technology

■ Job Description

Ophthalmic medical personnel (OMPs) assist ophthalmologists (MDs). OMP tasks include history taking; lensometry; tonometry (measurement of fluid pressure within the eyeball); application of eye dressing and eye drops; maintenance of instruments; measurement of refractive power, eye movement, and field of vision; contact lens measurement and care; patient teaching; color vision testing; photography of the eye; electronic testing; and surgical assisting.

■ Job Settings

Ophthalmic medical personnel function in a professional setting similar to that in which an x-ray technician assists a physician radiologist. Certified OMPs may work in private practices, clinics, hospitals, research facilities, and training programs. Ophthalmic medical personnel may choose to work in Third World countries for charitable concerns. Others develop subspecialties such as ophthalmic photography or surgical assisting.

■ Projected Need

The growing and aging population will spur demand for additional services related to correction of vision. Individuals with formal training or experience will have the best opportunities. It is expected that with the increased emphasis on customer service, more technicians will be needed in retail stores who supply vision services.

■ Salaries

Salaries for ophthalmic medical personnel depend on the amount of work experience and level of certification attained. Nationally, the average salary for certified ophthalmic assistants is \$25,000 to \$30,000 per year. The entry-level salaries of an ophthalmic technician average \$25,000 per year. Starting salaries for ophthalmic technologists range from \$30,000 to \$38,000 per year. Experienced technologists in supervisory positions may earn \$50,000 to \$60,000 annually.

■ Related Careers

Orthoptics, retinal angiography, contact lens technicianry, medical sonography, perimetry, and opticianry

■ Differences in Training

Certification by the Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel in Ophthalmology (JCAHPO) is granted at three skill levels: (1) assistant, (2) technician, and (3) technologist. At each level of certification, candidates must take a written certification exam, which is given annually by JCAHPO. Certain prerequisites are required before a candidate is allowed to sit for the exam.

Candidates for the assistant-level exam must have one year of work experience and have successfully completed an approved home study course or an approved institutional program. Some equivalency criteria apply for candidates in related fields. Sponsorship by an ophthalmologist is required. In Illinois, ophthalmic technician training is offered at Triton College in River Grove.

■ 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.

[Ophthalmic Technology](#)

■ Credentials

Certification is not required by law; however, certification means the person has fulfilled the required academic and clinical training and has successfully completed the appropriate JCAHPO exam. Because certification represents a standard in the profession, it may facilitate finding employment in a desired location.

■ **Advanced Training**

Individuals may advance to a higher level of certification by earning continuing education credits, acquiring the required length of work experience, and taking the certification examination for the desired level. Ophthalmic medical personnel must maintain their certification through continuing education and supervised work experience.

■ **Resources**

Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel
in Ophthalmology
2025 Woodlane Drive
St. Paul, MN 55125-2995
Phone: 800.284.3937
<http://www.jcahpo.org>

JCAHPO's Education and Research Foundation offers scholarships to students in ophthalmic educational training programs. The foundation granted 31 scholarships for the 2002-2003 academic year.