

Radiologist Assistant

■ Job Description

The radiologist assistant is a newly emerging allied health care occupation that will provide an advanced clinical role for experienced radiologic technologists.

The radiologist assistant will take a lead role in patient management and assessment. Duties in this area might include determining whether a patient has been appropriately prepared for a procedure, obtaining patient consent prior to beginning the procedure, answering questions from the patient and his or her family, and adapting exam protocols to improve diagnostic quality. The radiologist assistant also would be expected to serve as a patient advocate, ensuring that each patient receives quality care while in the radiology department or clinic.

This new health care professional will perform selected radiology exams and procedures under the supervision of a radiologist. These procedures might include assisting radiologists with invasive procedures, performing fluoroscopy for noninvasive procedures, and placing nasoenteric and orogastric feeding tubes in uncomplicated patients.

The radiologist assistant will be responsible for evaluating image quality, making initial image observations and forwarding those observations to the supervising radiologist. The supervising radiologist would remain responsible for providing a final written report, an interpretation or a diagnosis.

■ Projected Need

As the population ages, demand for health care services, including radiology, will rise dramatically. This increase in patient demand coupled with a growing shortage of radiologists and radiologic technologists have created a need for the radiologist assistant. By taking a lead role in patient assessment and management and by performing procedures such as fluoroscopy, the radiologist assistant will reduce the amount of time required of radiologists, allowing them to focus on the medical requirements of interpretation. Use of radiologist assistants will permit greater numbers of patients to be examined and treated.

The creation of the radiologist assistant career level will provide a pathway for radiologic technologists to advance in their profession. This will serve to attract prospective students to the profession of radiology technology and retain practicing technologists.

■ Differences in Training

Students in radiologist assistant programs will complete a standardized curriculum at the baccalaureate level or higher. The academic program will be supplemented by a formal clinical preceptorship with a supervising radiologist. Through this preceptorship, the student radiologist assistant will acquire the hands-on skills required to perform radiology exams and procedures.

Four universities received grants from the American Society of Radiologic Technologists (ASRT) to develop radiologist assistant training programs. These institutions include: Loma Linda University in California, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey in Newark, and Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls, Texas.

The radiologist assistant program at Loma Linda University opened in September, 2003. It is anticipated that the remaining three institutions will begin enrolling students at the start of the fall term of 2004.

■ 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.

[Medical Imaging Technology](#)

■ Credentials

The ASRT has been working with the American College of Radiology, the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists, the National Society of

Radiology Practitioner Assistants and other organizations to develop the educational criteria, roles and responsibilities and career pathway for the radiologist assistant. The organizations anticipate that a national certification method will be developed so that graduates of radiologist assistant programs can demonstrate that they are qualified to enter the profession. Certification would be based on a standardized national exam, and a unique set of credentials would be awarded to those who pass the exam.

■ Resources

American Society of Radiologic Technologists
15000 Central Avenue, SE
Albuquerque, NM 87123-3917
Phone: 800.444.2778
E-mail: communication@asrt.org
<http://www.asrt.org>
Click on “Professional Development” in the left side bar. Select “Radiologist Assistant.”

The society offers scholarships ranging from \$2,500 to \$4,000 to students attending an entry-level radiologic sciences program. Applicants must demonstrate financial need.

American Registry of Radiologic Technologists
1255 Northland Drive
St. Paul, MN 55120-1155
Phone: 651.687.0048
<http://www.arrt.org>
Click on “Radiologist Assistant” in the left side bar.