

Diagnostic Medical Sonographer

The diagnostic medical sonographer provides patient services using medical ultrasound (high-frequency sound waves that produce images of internal structures). Working under the supervision of a physician responsible for the use and interpretation of ultrasound procedures, the sonographer helps gather sonographic data to diagnose a variety of conditions and diseases, as well as monitor fetal development.



Job Description

The sonographer provides patient services in a variety of medical settings in which the physician is responsible for the use and interpretation of ultrasound procedures. In assisting physicians in gathering sonographic data, the diagnostic medical sonographer is able to

- Obtain, review, and integrate pertinent patient history and supporting clinical data to facilitate optimum diagnostic results
- Perform appropriate procedures and record anatomical, pathological, and/or physiological data for interpretation by a physician
- Record and process sonographic data and other pertinent observations made during the procedure for presentation to the interpreting physician
- Exercise discretion and judgment in the performance of sonographic services
- Provide patient education related to medical ultrasound
- Promote principles of good health



Employment Characteristics

Diagnostic medical sonographers may be employed in hospitals, clinics, private offices, and industry. Most full-time sonographers work about 40 hours a week; they may have evening weekend hours and times when they are on call and must be ready to report to work on short notice.

The demand for sonographers, including suitably qualified educators, researchers, and administrators, continues to exceed the supply, with faster than average job growth anticipated. The supply and demand ratio affects salaries, depending on experience and responsibilities.



Salary

According to the Society of Diagnostic Medical Sonographers, the hourly salary for diagnostic medical sonographers is \$29.00; median income in 2005 was \$61,984. Refer to Section IV, Table 5 of this *Directory* for more information, or see www.ama-assn.org/go/hpsalary.



Educational Programs

Length. Accredited programs are between 1 and 4 years (certificate, associate, and baccalaureate level), depending on program design, objectives, and the degree or certificate awarded.

Prerequisites. Applicants to a 1-year program must possess qualifications in a clinically related allied health profession. Applicants to 2-year programs must be high school graduates (or equivalent) with an educational background in basic science, general physics, and algebra. All applicants must demonstrate satisfactory completion of the following courses at college level: general physics, biological science, algebra, and communication skills.

Skills potential and practicing sonographers should exhibit include social perceptiveness, learning strategies, critical thinking skills, instructional skills, active listening, active learning, reading comprehension, and written/oral expression.

Curriculum. Curricula of accredited programs include physical sciences, applied biological sciences, patient care, clinical medicine, applications of ultrasound, instrumentation, related diagnostic procedures, and image evaluation. A plan for well-structured, competency-based clinical education is an essential part of the curriculum of all sonography programs.



Registration

Although no state requires licensure in diagnostic medical sonography, organizations such as the American Registry for Diagnostic Medical Sonography (ARDMS) certify the competency of sonographers through registration. Because registration provides an independent, objective measure of an individual's professional standing, many employers prefer to hire registered sonographers. Registration with ARDMS requires passing a general physical principles and instrumentation examination, in addition to passing an exam in a specialty such as obstetric and gynecologic sonography, abdominal sonography, or neurosonography. To keep their registration current, sonographers must complete continuing education to stay abreast of technological advances related to the occupation.



Inquiries

Careers/Curriculum

Society of Diagnostic Medical Sonography
2745 Dallas Parkway, Suite 350
Plano, TX 75093-4706
214 473-8057
214 473-8563 Fax
E-mail: info@sdms.org
www.sdms.org

Society for Vascular Ultrasound
4601 Presidents Drive, Suite 260
Lanham, MD 20706-4365
301 459-7550 or 800 SVT- VEIN
301 459-5651 Fax
www.svtnet.org

American Society of Echocardiography
1500 Sunday Drive, Suite 102
Raleigh, NC 27607
919 861-5574
919 787-4916 Fax
www.asecho.org

Registration

American Registry for Diagnostic Medical Sonography
51 Monroe Street, Plaza East Ore
Rockville, MD 20852
301 738-8401
www.ardms.org

American Registry of Radiologic Technologists
1255 Northland Drive
St Paul, MN 55120-1155
651 687-0048
www.arrt.org

Program Accreditation

Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs
(CAAHEP) in collaboration with:
Joint Review Committee on Education in Diagnostic Medical
Sonography

2025 Woodlane Drive
St Paul, MN 55125
651 731-1582
E-mail: jrc-dms@jcahpo.org

Note: Adapted in part from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, US
Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, 2006-07
Edition, Diagnostic Medical Sonographers, on the Internet at
www.bls.gov/oco/ocos273.htm (visited November 06, 2007).