

# Health Information and Communication

Includes:

- Cancer registrar
- Health information administrator
- Health information technician
- Medical coder
- Medical librarian
- Medical transcriptionist

## Cancer Registrar

Cancer registrars are data management experts who report cancer statistics for various health care agencies. Registrars work closely with physicians, administrators, researchers, and health care planners to provide support for cancer program development, ensure compliance of reporting standards, and serve as a valuable resource for cancer information with the ultimate goal of preventing and controlling cancer. The cancer registrar is involved in managing and analyzing clinical cancer information for the purpose of education, research, and outcome measurement.



### Career Description

Cancer registrars possess the clinical and technical knowledge and skills necessary to maintain components of the disease-related data collection systems consistent with medical, administrative, ethical, and legal and accreditation requirements of the health care delivery system. The cancer registrar's primary responsibility is to ensure that timely, accurate, and complete data are incorporated and maintained on all types of cancer diagnosed and/or treated within an institution or other defined population. Information is entered into the database manually and through database linkage and computer interfaces.

Cancer registrars bridge the information gap by capturing a complete summary of the patient's disease from diagnosis through their lifetime. The information is not limited to the episodic information contained in the health care facility record. The summary or abstract is an ongoing account of the cancer patient's history, diagnosis, treatment, and current status and includes information from sources outside of the health care facility.

In addition to managing and reporting cancer data, registrars serve in multiple other professional activities. Cancer registrars participate in cancer program, institution, and community benefit activities as part of the active leadership structure. Registrars provide benchmarking services, monitor quality of care and clinical practice guidelines, assess patterns of care and referrals, and monitor adverse outcomes including mortality and co-morbidity. Cancer registrars can provide consultative services on many issues including registry management and program standards.



### Employment Characteristics

Employment opportunities for cancer registrars are found in health care facilities, cancer research organizations, clinical trials, federal and state public health agencies, pharmaceutical companies, computer vendors, and consulting firms. Registrars' expertise is in demand in almost any organization with a focus on cancer or cancer data.



### Salary

According to the National Cancer Registrars Association (NCRA), entry-level salaries average between

\$39,506 and \$55,134. ("NCRA Frontline Workers in Cancer Data Management: Workforce Analysis Study of the Cancer Registry Field," September 2005.) For more information, refer to [www.ama-assn.org/go/hpsalary](http://www.ama-assn.org/go/hpsalary).



### Educational Programs

**Length.** Beginning in 2010, the requirement to sit for certification is a minimum of an associate's degree in Cancer Information Management or an associate, baccalaureate or masters degree in a recognized allied health field plus 1,950 hours of experience in the cancer registry field. Detailed information is available at: [www.ctrexam.org/eligibility](http://www.ctrexam.org/eligibility).

**Prerequisites.** Applicants for the associate degree program for Cancer Information Management and other accepted allied health degrees should have a high school diploma or equivalent, medical terminology, and anatomy and physiology.

**Curriculum.** The preprofessional curriculum should include appropriate general education credits predicated on the requirements of the academic institution. The professional curriculum requires:

- Cancer Registry Structure and Management
  - Introduction to Cancer Registries
  - Legal and Ethical Issues and Standards
  - Registry Organization; Types of Registries
  - Cancer Registry Management
  - National Standard Setters
- Cancer Registry Operations
  - Case Ascertainment
  - Disease Registry Files
  - Principles of Abstracting and Data Set Identification
  - Registry Standards and Networking
  - Registry Standards for Approved Cancer Programs
- Cancer Disease, Coding and Staging
  - Cancer and Its Natural Disease Course
  - Coding Systems (ICD-O-3)
  - Coding Diagnosis
  - Evaluating Extent of Disease
  - American Joint Committee on Cancer
  - Summary Staging
  - Collaborative Staging
- Oncology Treatment and Coding
  - Surgery
  - Surgical Coding
  - Radiation Coding
  - Chemotherapy
  - Chemotherapy Coding
  - Immunotherapy
  - Immunotherapy Coding
  - Hormonal Treatment
  - Hormonal Therapy Coding

- Alternative, Palliative and experimental treatments
- Other treatment coding
- Clinical Trials
- Coding and Monitoring
- Abstracting Methods
  - Components of the Medical Record
  - Structure and Content of Source Documents
  - Abstracting Principles
  - Abstracting Medical Records
- Outcomes and Data Quality and Utilization
  - Policies and Procedures
  - Cancer Patient Methodology
  - Statistics and Epidemiology
  - Database Management



### Certification

The National Cancer Registrars Association's Council on Certification administers a semi-annual examination for those eligible to become Certified Tumor Registrars (CTR). Candidates must meet eligibility requirements that include a combination of experience in the cancer registry field and the appropriate education. Persons who have successfully completed the certification exam have demonstrated that they have met or exceeded the standard level of experience and technical knowledge required for effective cancer data management. To maintain certification, the NCRA's current continuing education

requirements of 20 hours every years must be met. Detailed information is available at: [www.ctrexam.org/eligibility](http://www.ctrexam.org/eligibility).



### Inquiries

#### Careers, Program Accreditation

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#### Certification

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