

# Histotechnician

Physicians (usually pathologists) and other scientists specializing in biological sciences or related clinical areas such as chemistry work in partnership with medical laboratory workers to analyze blood, tissues, and fluids from humans (and sometimes animals), using a variety of precision instruments. The results of these tests are used to detect and diagnose disease and other abnormalities.

The main responsibility of the histotechnician in the clinical laboratory is preparing sections of body tissue for examination by a pathologist. This includes the preparation of tissue specimens of human and animal origin for diagnostic, research, or teaching purposes. Tissue sections prepared by the histotechnician for a variety of disease entities enable the pathologist to diagnose body dysfunction and malignancy.

## Career Description

Histotechnicians process sections of body tissue by fixation, dehydration, embedding, sectioning, decalcification, microincineration, mounting, and routine and special staining. They identify tissue structures, cell components, and their staining characteristics and relate them to physiological functions; and institute proper procedures to maintain accuracy and precision.

## Employment Characteristics

Most histotechnicians work in hospital or reference laboratories.

## Salary

According to the 2010 Wage and Vacancy Survey conducted by the American Society for Clinical Pathology (ASCP), histotechnicians earn an average median wage of \$22.68 per hour or \$47,174 annually; supervisors earn a median average wage of \$29.48 per hour or \$61,318 per year. The survey results were published in the March 2011 issue of *LabMedicine*, available at <http://labmed.ascpjournals.org/content/42/3/141>.

For more information, refer to [www.ama-assn.org/go/hpsalary](http://www.ama-assn.org/go/hpsalary).

## Educational Programs

**Length.** Programs for the histotechnician are 12 months, unless the curriculum is an integral part of a college program.

**Prerequisites.** High school diploma or equivalent to enter a college-based program. For admission into hospital-based programs, credentials ranging from a high school diploma to an associate degree may be required. Each program will have its own prerequisites for the amount of education required, including specific biology, chemistry, and math courses that are required before acceptance into the program.

**Curriculum.** The curriculum includes both didactic instruction and practical demonstration in the areas of:

- Medical ethics
- Medical terminology
- Chemistry
- Laboratory mathematics
- Computer technology
- Organic and/or biochemistry
- Immunology
- Anatomy
- Histology
- Histochemistry
- Quality control
- Instrumentation
- Microscopy
- Processing techniques
- Laboratory safety
- Preparation of museum specimens
- Record procedures

It is recommended that the curriculum be an integral part of a junior or community college program culminating in an associate degree and that the course of study include chemistry, biology, and mathematics.

## Inquiries

### Careers/Curriculum

American Society for Clinical Pathology  
33 West Monroe, Suite 1600  
Chicago, IL 60603  
(312) 541-4999  
E-mail: [info@ascp.org](mailto:info@ascp.org)  
[www.ascp.org](http://www.ascp.org)

National Society for Histotechnology

10320 Little Patuxent Parkway, Suite 804  
Columbia, MD 21044  
(443) 535-4060  
E-mail: [histo@nsh.org](mailto:histo@nsh.org)  
[www.nsh.org](http://www.nsh.org)

**Certification/Registration**

American Society for Clinical Pathology  
Board of Certification  
33 West Monroe, Suite 1600  
Chicago, IL 60603  
(800) 267-2727, option 2  
(312) 738-1336, Ext 1341  
E-mail: [boc@ascp.org](mailto:boc@ascp.org)  
[www.ascp.org](http://www.ascp.org)

**Program Accreditation**

Dianne M Cearlock, PhD, Chief Executive Officer  
National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences  
5600 North River Road, Suite 720  
Rosemont, IL 60018  
(847) 939-3597 or (773) 714-8880  
E-mail: [info@naacls.org](mailto:info@naacls.org)  
[www.naacls.org](http://www.naacls.org)