

Pathologists' Assistant

Anatomic pathologists are physicians who examine tissue specimens from patients and perform autopsies to diagnose the disease processes involved. Pathologists' assistants participate in autopsies and in the examination, dissection, and processing of tissue specimens. They function as physician extenders.



Career Description

The following services are provided under the direct supervision of a licensed and board-certified pathologist and should include, but not be limited to, the following:

Surgical pathology. Assisting in the preparation and performance of surgical specimen dissection by ensuring appropriate specimen accessioning, obtaining pertinent clinical information and studies, describing gross anatomic features, dissecting surgical specimens, preparing and submitting tissue for histologic processing, obtaining and submitting specimens for additional analytic procedures (immunostaining, flow cytometry, image analysis, bacterial and viral cultures, toxicology, etc), and assisting in photographing gross and microscopic specimens.

Autopsy pathology. Assisting in the performance of postmortem examination by ascertaining proper legal authorization; obtaining and reviewing the patient's chart and other pertinent clinical data and studies; notifying involved personnel of all special procedures and techniques required; coordinating special requests for specimens; notifying involved clinicians and appropriate authorities and individuals; assisting in the postmortem examination; selecting and preparing tissue for histologic processing and special studies; obtaining specimens for biological and toxicologic analysis; assisting in photographing gross and microscopic specimens and photomicrography; and participating in the completion of the autopsy report.

Additional duties. Assuming duties as may be assigned relative to teaching, administrative, supervisory, and budgetary functions in anatomic pathology.



Employment Characteristics

Pathologists' assistants are employed in a variety of settings, including community and regional hospitals, university medical centers, private pathology laboratories, and medical examiners/coroners' offices.



Salary

Salaries vary with geographic location and type of employing institution. As of 2007, entry-level salaries begin at \$75,000- \$85,000; upper ranges of salary are \$85,000 to more than \$100,000. For more information, refer to www.ama-assn.org/go/hpsalary.



Educational Programs

Length. Minimum of 22 months.

Degree. Most programs are at the master's level.

Prerequisites. Variable among programs and dependent on the degree offered. Baccalaureate programs require a minimum of 60 hours of acceptable credits, with variable specific requirements.

Curriculum. The curriculum includes both didactic and practical training to provide a sound background in the basic medical

sciences and the necessary skills to work in an anatomic pathology laboratory. Coursework includes anatomy, physiology, and medical terminology, as well as general, systemic, pediatric, and forensic pathology. Clinical training includes autopsy pathology, surgical pathology, forensic pathology, and medical photography.



Inquiries

Careers/Curriculum

American Medical Technologists
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American Association of Pathologists' Assistants

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www.pathologistsassistants.org

American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science

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American Society for Clinical Pathology

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312 541-4999

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Certification/Registration

American Society for Clinical Pathology

Board of Registry

PO Box 12270

Chicago, IL 60612

312 738-1336, Ext 1341

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www.ascp.org

National Certification Agency for Medical Laboratory Personnel

PO Box 15945-289

Lenexa, KS 66285

913 438-5110

E-mail: nca-info@goamp.com

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American Association of Bioanalysts

Board of Registry

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Program Accreditation

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