

# Health Care Careers



# Keeping Patients Comfortable

Modern medicine wouldn't be what it is without the means to comfortably, safely treat patients.

A critical component of that is the team of anesthesiologists that work with doctors and nurses to ensure procedures achieve the best outcomes possible.

## **ANESTHESIOLOGIST**

The anesthesiologist directs pain management care. The medications they use block pain in different ways, sometimes numbing parts of the body and sometimes working on the whole system to put you to sleep. Anesthesiologists are doctors of medicine or doctors of osteopathic medicine.

## **CERTIFIED REGISTERED NURSE ANESTHETISTS**

A certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA) is a registered nurse who has completed a course in nurse anesthesia training from an accredited program. They are considered advanced practice nurses and are often supervised by the anesthesiologist. They, along with the rest of the team, are responsible for all types of pain management care.

## **CERTIFIED ANESTHESIOLOGIST ASSISTANT**

Certified anesthesiologist assistants are similar to CRNAs, but are not registered nurses. They may have a



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science or pre-medical degree background rather than a nursing degree. Working as part of the team, these medical professionals operate and manage anesthesia equipment, assist with care and monitor vital signs and the patient's comfort level.

## **WHEN DO PATIENTS SEE THE ANESTHESIA TEAM?**

Anesthesiology teams help

with a variety of procedures, not just major surgeries, though they're certainly onboard then, too.

Before the patient's procedure, the anesthesiologist will assess health and test results, fitness for the planned procedure and come up with a safe anesthesia plan. They ask questions about the patient's overall health as well as about any existing conditions, such

as diabetes or asthma. They may ask about allergies and any personal or family issues with anesthesia.

The anesthesia team needs to be told about any fever in reaction to anesthesia or severe nausea and vomiting after surgery.

During the procedure, the team will monitor vital signs, manage any medical conditions and administer fluids

and medications to support bodily functions, such as for the lungs or kidneys. When the procedure is done, the anesthesiology team's work continues, helping the patient recover from the effects of anesthesia administered during the procedure. They can help with ongoing pain management for different conditions or from the procedure itself.



# Exploring Health IT

As medical care becomes more data driven, the field of health information technology is growing and becoming more lucrative.

Health information technology involves the electronic processing, storage and exchange of health information. Use of this technology can improve health outcomes, prevent medical errors, reduce costs and expand access to affordable health care, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services says.

## MEDICAL CODERS

Medical coders are health professionals who translate patient medical records into standardized codes for billing, insurance claims and research. This allows a patient's health data to move clearly and efficiently through a variety of systems.

A medical coder's job begins immediately after the patient visit. They analyze the patient's chart, including any notes from the doctor, to understand the services provided. They then assign that information a code according to the system that office uses. Medical coders communicate with health care providers to clarify any information needed and make sure the codes are specific as they can

be. This ensures accuracy in billing and in health care records.

## HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNICIANS

These health care professionals manage and organize patient health records to keep them accurate, complete and confidential. This means entering and verifying patient data, updating records regularly, using coding and classification systems, and protecting patient information by keeping it confidential

and ensuring systems comply with local, state and federal patient confidentiality laws. Health information technicians may help retrieve patient records for health care providers and authorized personnel.

## ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD SYSTEMS IMPLEMENTATION SPECIALISTS

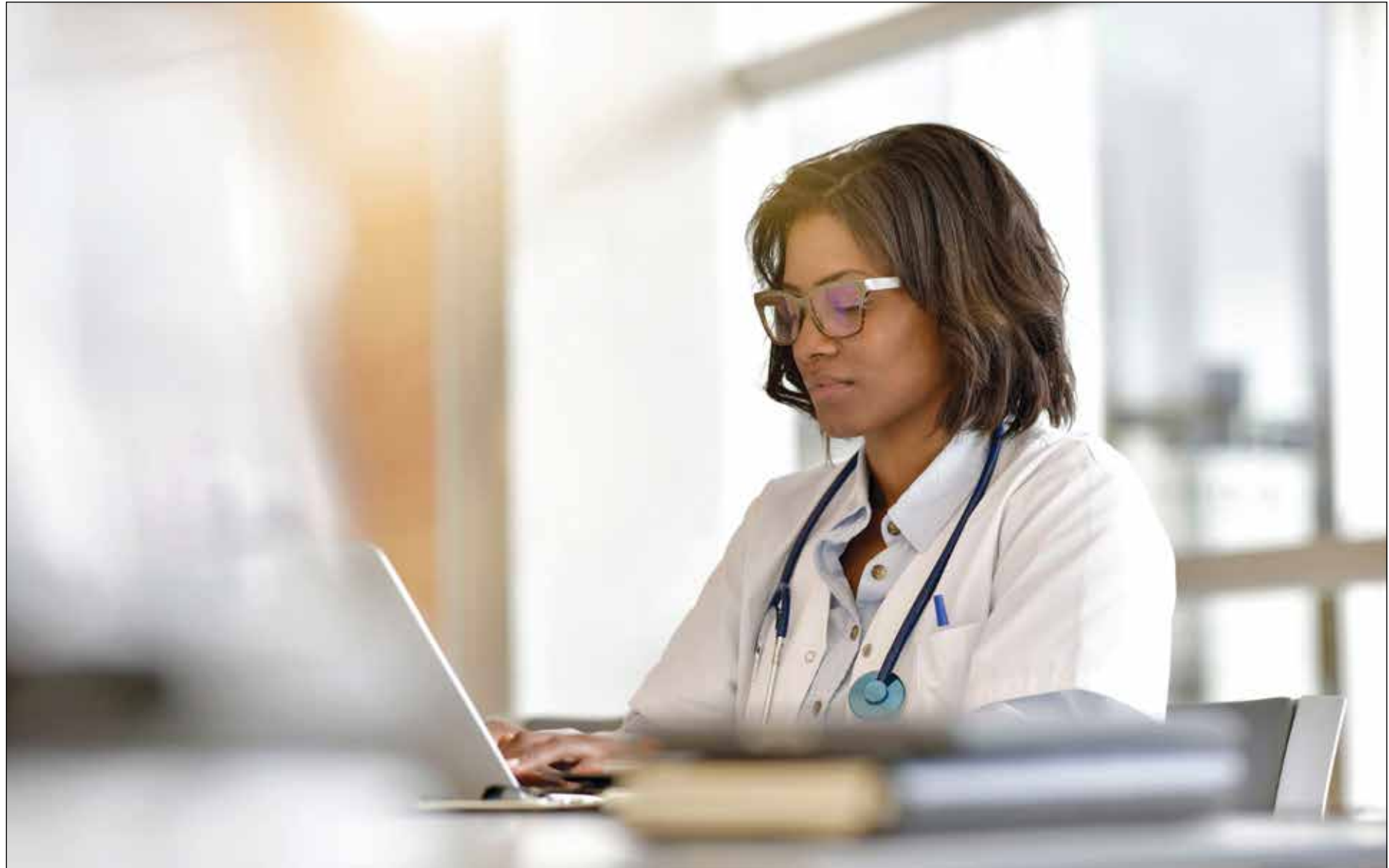
These information technology specialists work specifically with health care providers to set up and

manage the complex systems that keep patient records. This can include deploying the software, training health care staff to ensure successful adoption, migrating data, customizing the system and providing system support. They communicate with health care staff, IT teams and vendors to ensure health care records are kept safely and accurately.

## DATA ANALYSTS

Health care data analysts collect, process and analyze

data to help with patient care, streamline operations and inform decision-making process within health care organizations. These professionals analyze data from health care records, insurance claims and patient surveys to identify trends, create reports and ensure both administrative and operational goals are met. They may develop and present reports to communicate their findings to leadership and other stakeholders and audit data for accuracy.



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# Dialysis Techs Provide Critical Care

Dialysis is a medical treatment that removes waste, fluid and salt from the blood when a patient's kidneys are unable to do so.

It's a life-saving treatment for people suffering from kidney failure or other conditions where their kidneys shut down. The treatments keep safe levels of minerals, such as potassium, sodium and calcium, in the patient's blood and help regulate their blood pressure.

There are two types of dialysis. Hemodialysis uses a dialyzer or filtering machine to perform the treatment, then returns the filtered blood to the patient's body. Peritoneal dialysis, or PD, uses the patient's own body as a filter. A catheter is placed in the patient's belly and, during the treatment, the belly is slowly filled with a cleansing fluid. As blood flows through the area, waste products and extra fluid is pulled into the belly by the fluid. After a few hours, the fluid is drained through the catheter.

Dialysis technicians are health care professionals that operate the machines and monitor patients during their treatment.

## JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

Dialysis technicians, supervised by doctors and nurses, work with patients to help



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them receive their treatment safely and comfortably. Some duties may include assembling the dialysis machine, maintaining a clean treatment environment, observing patients during treatment for signs of medical emergencies, adjusting the treatment as needed to maintain patient safety and comfort, explaining the treatments to patients and their families, and documenting patient treatment events

and outcomes.

Indeed's Career Guide says dialysis technicians should be able to operate complicated medical technology and possess a variety of soft skills, such as an attention to detail, the ability to multitask, working as part of a team and having compassion for patients in difficult times.

## JOB REQUIREMENTS

Requirements vary from job

to job, but Indeed says generally, dialysis technicians should have a high school diploma or GED as well as job-specific training from vocational or technical schools, online classes or community colleges. Look for those with an accredited program. Indeed says certifications can be obtained, usually, within 12 to 18 months and some clinics are willing to provide on-the-job training.

## CAREER OUTLOOK

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts a 5% growth in job openings for dialysis technicians in the next decade, resulting in around 24,000 openings each year.

This is because, the Bureau says, of the increasing prevalence of kidney disease, which is linked to conditions like diabetes or high blood pressure.



# Help on the Journey to Recovery

Addiction counselors provide expert care specific to people who have substance use disorders, such as a dependence on alcohol or drugs.

Oftentimes, addiction comes with more complex mental health conditions, and addiction counselors can create recovery plans for each person.

## ADDICTION OR SUBSTANCE ABUSE?

The Cleveland Clinic says addiction counselors may be called substance abuse counselors, but that health care systems and other organizations are trying to steer away from the word abuse when it comes to issues with substances or behaviors. There's a lot of negativity associated with the term, the clinic says, and that could affect how people with addictions are treated and whether and when they seek help.

## THE ROLE OF THE ADDICTION COUNSELOR

Addiction counselors start by assessing a patient's mental and physical health. They determine the severity of the addiction and the patient's readiness for change. The counselor may identify other challenges that can affect the patient's treatment and opportunities for success.

The counselor develops a

personalized plan to address the substance use. This may involve medical care, therapy, rehabilitation programs, support groups and other resources. They may work with other health care providers to tailor plans to meet the patient's goals and needs. They can act as a bridge between the patient and any outside

resources, including medical resources and job placement programs.

The addiction counselor intervenes in times of crisis, especially if the patient is endangering their lives or the lives of others. They can work with families to help patients stay on the path to sobriety and provide counseling to not only

the patient, but their whole support system.

## BECOMING AN ADDICTION COUNSELOR

An addiction counselor usually has at least a bachelor's degree, and many states require a master's degree as well as licensure and certification. Some certifications include

those from the International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium's Alcohol and Drug Counselor Examination or an exam from the National Certification Commission for Addiction Professionals. Some states may require supervised professional practice before an addiction counselor strikes out on their own.



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# School Nurses Make the Grade

School nurses are health care professionals who operate in a slightly different environment — the nation's schools.

They provide health care to students by assessing and treating illnesses or injuries, helping manage chronic conditions such as asthma, and coordinating care with families and medical professionals. These nurses may help perform health screenings, manage student health records and immunizations, and support health education programs.

Schools with school nurses have higher academic outcomes, the National Association of School Nurses says, and these health care professionals can save families and educators both time and money.

## JOB REQUIREMENTS

School nurses typically need a nursing degree and certification as a registered nurse. They need to obtain any state-specific licensure and certifications. Some states require specific school nursing certifications, such as the National Board of Certification for School Nurses. It's important to have current CPR and first aid certifications. Certifications may require practical hours in addition to passing an exam.

## SOFT SKILLS

Soft skills are critical tools in the school nurse's toolkit. Compassion, Mercer University says, is one of the most important skills a school nurse can have. Medical issues can be uncertain and tense for patients and their families, and nurses should be able to connect with patients on a human

level, build trust and create an environment of calm and comfort.

Other critical tools are communication and teamwork. School nurses are part of a holistic educational team, all working toward building bright futures for American students. In the school setting, nurses can act as a liaison among

health care professionals, and among students and the adults in their lives, which can include teachers, other school staff, and families.

## WHERE SCHOOL NURSES WORK

Of course, school nurses work in schools, but they can also be found in daycare

centers, pre-schools, summer camps, colleges and universities, health departments, boarding schools, hospitals, vocational schools and on military bases. In regular day schools, school nurses work with elementary, middle or high school-aged students; populations with very different needs.



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# Medical Ethicists Provide Guidance



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Medical ethics is an applied branch of ethics which provides guidance in the realm of clinical medicine and related scientific research.

These health care professionals consult with other medical professionals, patients and their families, helping to develop and implement policies for hospitals and research institutions.

## **JOB RESPONSIBILITIES**

Medical ethicists provide guidance for medical professionals as they make decisions on ethical, legal or social issues. They're a vital part of the health care team that guides other professionals in determining what's medically

appropriate in conflicts between a patient's rights and a doctor's goals. Ethicists develop and interpret guidelines, policies and agreements and can translate legislative or legal mandates into actionable ideas.

These health care professionals recommend strategies to promote health care access by reducing disparities between the populations an organization serves, provide training for providers on ethical issues, develop methods to fund medical research in ethically sensitive ways, and help

expand the services offered by health care organizations.

## **EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

Medical ethicists graduate from medical schools with either a master's or doctoral degree in medical ethics. They receive formal training on ethical issues through classes taken within their medical school or residency program. Indeed's Career Guide says medical ethicists need logic and judgment to work through arguments related to health care issues, as well as communication skills to work effectively with colleagues and patients.

Creativity is another skill medical ethicists need as they may be called upon to find innovative solutions to ethical,

legal or social issues. They may be called upon to find new ways to improve the quality of health care outcomes and to be a leader in the workplace.

## **WHERE DO MEDICAL ETHICISTS WORK?**

Medical ethicists work in the hospital setting, but they're also involved at research institutions, medical schools and universities. Depending on the setting, they may be called in to resolve conflicts between health care providers and patients or their families, teach classes related to ethics or the law, provide support that's not given by other doctors or insurance companies, or work on campaigns to improve health care outcomes and patient lives.

# Infection Control Specialists

An infection control specialist or infection preventionist is a health care professional that develops ways to detect, prevent and control the spread of illnesses in a health care setting.

They can monitor organizations for outbreaks, educate staff and patients on best practices, and help develop and implement policies and procedures.

## A GROWING FIELD

The COVID-19 pandemic showed the critical importance of infection control specialists and the role they play in preparing communities for infectious disease threats. The Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC) says the need for these health care professionals is growing for the same reason many health care fields are, an older population with more complex health needs.

## JOB REQUIREMENTS

APIC says infection control is a multidisciplinary field and specialists may have training as nurses, epidemiologists, public health professionals, lab technicians, in IT or medical technology, microbiology, lab studies, allied health



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professions, or doctors. They work in a variety of settings, but all have one common goal — to advocate for a culture of safety for patients, staff and the organization's community.

Infection control specialists work in a variety of organizations, including hospitals, nursing homes, long-term care facilities, outpatient clinics, surgery centers, rehabilitation centers, behavioral health units, jails and prisons, and in public health agencies. They may consult with schools and

businesses as well as other community partners about how to keep the public healthy and prevent the spread of diseases.

## WHAT INFECTION CONTROL SPECIALISTS DO

Some examples of infection control specialists' duties include:

- Looking for patterns and spotting infections in health care facilities, focusing on antibiotic-resistant diseases or those associated with invasive

procedures.

- Track infection data and activities to prevent health care-associated infections.

- Integrate evidence-based infection prevention practices into facility-wide policies, guidelines, protocols and educational strategies.

- Work with clinical teams to limit unnecessary antimicrobial use to prevent resistance.

- Educate health care personnel and the public about disease and how to limit its

spread.

- Observe and educate health care personnel on proper hand hygiene, use of personal protective equipment, cleaning and disinfecting rooms and medical instruments, and other practices proven to reduce infections.

- Consult with public health agencies, including the U.S. Centers for Disease Control.

- Serve as leaders and subject matter experts during infectious outbreaks.