

Lesson 1

The Exciting World of Medical Transcription



Step 1 Learning Objectives for Lesson 1

- ❑ When you have completed the instruction in this lesson, you will be trained to do the following:
 - Explain how the course is organized.
 - Explain the role of a medical transcriptionist.
 - Describe *electronic health records*, *electronic medical records* and *speech recognition technology*.



Step 2 Lesson Preview

- ❑ What do you think about when you're sitting in the pediatrician's waiting room with your feverish child? It's a silly question, right? Obviously, you want your child to be well. The last thing you want to worry about is the accuracy of your medical information. When your pediatrician examines your son, what do you want her to be thinking about? Do you want her to be wondering whether the information in your son's file is completely up to date and precise? Of course not! You want her to be able to rely on the information in the medical records and focus on your child's well-being without being distracted by doubts. Medical transcriptionists ensure that the medical reports that physicians refer to are accurate and reliable.



Medical transcriptionists help ensure that medical records are accurate and reliable.

Welcome to the U.S. Career Institute Medical Transcription Course! You're one step closer to an exciting and rewarding career as a medical transcriptionist as you learn the ins and outs of the medical transcription industry. Medical transcription provides a crucial service to doctors and their patients—people just like you.

U.S. Career Institute's Medical Transcription Course will introduce you to the medical transcription field, sharpen your listening skills, teach you how to transcribe actual medical reports and show you the correct formatting for reports. In addition, you'll learn the details of the medical field including pharmacology, body systems, pediatrics and neuropsychiatry. You also will learn about medical ethics and the latest in medical transcription technology. Your course concludes with a medical transcription practicum where you'll apply what you've learned.



By studying this course, you'll acquire the skills you need for a new career.

medical capitalization and punctuation. But before we do, let's follow a day in the life of Jenny, a home-based medical transcriptionist.

Are you ready? Let's get started!

Your course is divided into lessons. Each lesson contains skills you will master and build upon. The lessons are constructed in an easy-to-follow, step-by-step instruction method that makes learning easier and FUN!

After you study the new material in a lesson, you will take a Practice Exercise. This is designed to highlight what is important in the course. Nothing in the course—including the quiz—is designed to trick you. You will remember many of the items on the quiz without looking back at the lesson. But if you don't remember or aren't sure of the answer, go back through the lesson and find the information. All of our quizzes are open-book. We want you to find the right answer, rather than try to memorize everything.

If you have questions about any part of this course, call your school. Help is available to make your trip through this course enjoyable, challenging and rewarding.

Listening is an essential skill for medical transcriptionists. In the next few lessons, we're going to jump right into the heart of the matter and learn about word parts, listening skills, plurals, proper names, abbreviations, acronyms,



Step 3 The Medical Transcriptionist Jenny

- ❑ Jenny runs a medical transcription service out of her home office. She has three children under age 14—one in junior high and two in elementary school. This morning, Jenny sends her two younger boys next door to stay with her neighbor, Cassie, because she has an early day. Jenny's eighth-grader has jazz band at 7:30; after Jenny drops her at rehearsal, she heads to the neighborhood coffee shop. Jenny has set up a brief "coffee stop" networking meeting with the office manager and the managing medical doctor (MD) of a new ear, nose and throat clinic opening south of town.



Working at home is just one of the benefits of being a transcriptionist.

As her potential clients sip their mochas and lattes, Jenny briefly explains her experience in medical transcription and outlines how she works with clients. She follows this information with a brochure and business card. After asking a few questions about their practice, Jenny arranges to call them later in the week to follow up and thank them for their time. The meeting is brief because they have patients to see at 8:15, and she has work to do at home.

Jenny stops by Cassie's to be sure that her sons got to school OK and to confirm their afternoon plans—Cassie's son is coming to Jenny's home after school until Cassie gets off her shift.

Jenny logs onto a Web site and downloads six dictated reports from yesterday. Her fingers fly over her computer keyboard, and she completes three of her six reports. Then she proofs them on screen before e-mailing them back to the clinic. She'll transcribe the remaining three reports, proof them and then submit the completed reports to the clinic. After dinner, Jenny will see if there are more dictation files on the site.



Step 4 From Audio to Paper

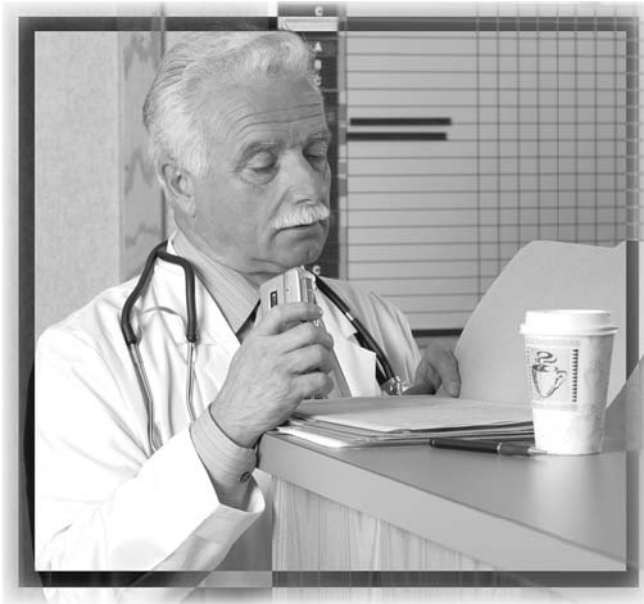
- ❑ Before we go on, here are a few words about technology. As you know, technology is changing the world. It seems that every six months, the “latest and greatest” becomes obsolete. Digital voice recorders that fit into your pocket are available; most likely doctors in your area may use digital recorders, but some offices may use audiotape recorders. Computer-based digital technologies also are becoming more widespread. Just remember—whatever method doctors use, the basic process of adding patient information through medical transcription will probably remain the same.

As you know from your visits to the doctor, medical visits can be quite thorough. When you are brought “into the back” from the reception area, you often stop to be weighed and measured. Sometimes patients give urine or blood samples. At some point, you might have your blood pressure checked. Almost all of this type of information is written right into the patient's record itself.

However, once you are in an examination room, medical professionals seek information that can't be jotted down as a number. For example, in a routine physical exam, a doctor may notice that her patient has lost 37 pounds in the last year. When she asks the patient about it, the patient explains that he was divorced within the past year. He seems tired and withdrawn. The doctor then probes to find out if the patient is depressed.

After the physician completes the patient's checkup, she needs a way to remember this information about this patient. At his next visit—whether it's for a sinus infection, headache or the flu—she needs to be able to take into account that she noticed changes at that visit. Other office personnel, such as the physician's assistant, may examine him at a different time; they need that information as well.

The doctor keeps track of this kind of information in notes she makes after an appointment. Most often, the doctor talks into a small audiotape or digital recorder. She narrates what happened at the visit—basically, she tells the story. However audiotapes or sound files aren't an accessible way to store this information.



Physicians record their notes onto a recorder and the medical transcriptionists type them into reports for the patients' medical records.

Your job as a medical transcriptionist is to take doctors' dictated notes and transcribe them—put them in a form that is accessible to everyone who needs the complete report on the patient's status. Some doctor's offices are "paperless offices," but others still believe it's easy to share information on paper. Most often, you will listen to the doctor's notes and type them into an electronic health record for each patient. However, some facilities still use paper records—either way, you will create an electronic report of the dictation.

The technical vocabulary and the level of detail in these notes varies depending on the patient, the reason for his visit and the doctor's specialty. But you can see that these types of notes add more to a patient's medical file—they help the doctor treat the whole patient, not just the parts of a person that can be discussed as numbers.

Once in the computer file, the notes can be added to the patient's medical file in a number of different ways, depending on the way the medical office is set up. First, the medical transcriptionist needs to get the patient information back to the client's office somehow. Some medical offices, like Jenny's clients, accept e-mailed files; for other offices, you'd use other ways to transfer the information. The information is then placed in the patient's medical file—printed for the file folder and possibly stored electronically as well.

Transcribing notes accurately and in a timely way is important. Some patients have conditions, such as cancer or another serious illness, that require further urgent medical attention; it is imperative for accurate diagnosis and treatment that each specialist involved have the most up-to-date information. They shouldn't have to wait for a transcription of the previous visit.

Let's take a look at another medical transcriptionist named Jack who works for a transcription company.



Step 5 The Medical Transcriptionist Jack

- ❑ Jack has worked as a medical transcriptionist with his company for a few years. The transcription company works with several doctors' offices and medical facilities in different parts of the country—so he's always busy! Jack has seen the change in the medical transcription field, and has moved from transcribing audiotapes from offices in his area to transcribing digital sound files for facilities in other states. Jack works with offices that are paperless while others still use paper medical records. Let's take a look at a typical day for Jack.

Jack wakes up and heads to his home office to begin his day at 9:00 a.m. Jack logs onto the shared drive to which all the transcriptionists have access. The shared drive has folders for the transcription company's clients—various facilities and doctors' offices in different states. The physicians in many of the offices and facilities carry around a digital hand-held device and dictate their information directly into it. These sound files are then loaded onto the shared drive and saved into the corresponding medical facility or doctor's office folders. Jack opens up one of the sound files that he needs to transcribe. He uses a special program that is connected to the patients' electronic health records (EHRs). After Jack is finished typing it, he saves it to the patient's chart on the computer and moves the sound file into a folder for the finished reports. Once the transcribed report is saved in the patient's chart, it goes back to the physician for a signature. The physician opens up the report and signs it electronically. Then Jack is ready to start another report!



Sound files for transcription can be downloaded from a shared drive.

Some of Jack's facilities use speech recognition technology—which we'll discuss in a moment—to help transcribe reports. The program takes the physician's dictation and creates a report. Jack listens to the dictation and follows along with the report to make sure it was dictated correctly. Additionally, Jack edits as necessary and puts the report in the correct format.

Jack appreciates this technology because he doesn't have to type all of the physician's notes. Most of the time, Jack only has to alter portions of the report. However, Jack often edits the notes to check for accuracy—especially spelling. Sometimes the medical assistants or physicians overlook their spelling errors. Jack also appreciates the time the technology saves; he doesn't have to go pick up tapes from all the different doctors' offices and medical facilities. In the same way, Jack doesn't have to drop off reports; this could be tricky seeing as Jack transcribes reports for medical facilities in different states. Instead, everything is done electronically!

If an office uses paper charts rather than electronic health records, Jack and his transcription company use the sound files to transcribe, but then the office prints a copy of the report for the patient's paper chart.



Step 6 Technology and Medical Transcription

- ❑ Technology plays an important role in many medical transcription businesses. Some hospitals and doctors' offices are paperless because they use electronic imaging for data storage. Electronic documents allow information to flow between transcriptionists, coders and other staff members. Additionally, staff members can access records remotely from any location. Transcriptionists use an electronic signature to edit and sign their transcribed reports. Then the reports are available to be viewed electronically by care providers.

Speech Recognition Technology

Another technology that is improving the efficiency of medical transcription is speech recognition. **Speech recognition technology** does what its title implies—it recognizes speech. Speech recognition transcribes dictation into a draft report. Then the medical transcriptionist follows along with the draft report and listens to the dictation. This way the transcriptionist can edit as she goes. Pronunciation, accents and difficult words make speech recognition challenging, so a medical transcriptionist needs to check the draft report for mistakes.

When speech recognition technology surfaced, some transcriptionists were curious about its impact on their jobs. But speech recognition has enhanced the medical transcription field. Speech recognition technology allows transcriptionists to be more productive. Instead of spending time typing, transcriptionists can correct and complete more reports. In addition, medical transcriptionists learn the newest technology in their profession. Speech recognition technology also gives medical transcriptionists some variety in their positions because they alternate between transcribing and editing. Keep in mind that speech recognition technology is not yet widely used; however, it's a technology that you can look forward to learning more about in the future.



Although speech recognition technology can be helpful, sometimes the speech can be hard to decipher.

A drawback to speech recognition technology is that the speech can be hard to recognize. For example, if you have a physician that mumbles on his dictation, it's hard for the speech recognition program to decipher what the physician is saying. Another problem is if the physician talks too fast for the speech recognition program to transcribe.

Technology is so important to the medical transcription field, that some companies will actually provide the computer, foot pedal, high-speed Internet connection and other equipment for their transcriptionists. Other companies will rent equipment to the transcriptionist or require a deposit for borrowed equipment. This way the company can get their equipment back if the transcriptionist quits.

Electronic Health Records

Other types of technology also impact the medical transcription field. You were introduced to the Electronic Health Record (EHR) in the example of Jack, the medical transcriptionist for a transcription company. **Electronic health records (EHRs) or electronic medical records (EMRs)** are made up of entire medical files in electronic systems that are used to transmit, receive, store, retrieve and link healthcare data.¹ An EHR simply might be a scanned-in version of a paper medical record. In many offices, all documentation from a patient's visit is entered into the computer. For example, a patient's report isn't printed; instead the chart note is saved in the patient's medical record and electronically signed by the physician. Though these medical records are entirely electronic, many healthcare facilities still keep paper copies of medical records, and some facilities only use paper-based records.



Technology continues to enhance the medical transcription field.

Every facility is different, so you'll encounter different technology in the medical transcription field. It's an exciting time to be a medical transcriptionist, and technology will continue to enhance medical transcription.

Now that you've been introduced to some of the technology in the medical transcription field, let's take a Practice Exercise and apply what you've learned so far!

Step 7 Practice Exercise 1-1

- For questions 1 through 12, fill in the blanks with the correct answer. Remember, on all of the Practice Exercises and Quizzes throughout the course, you are allowed—encouraged—to check your answers with the course material.

1. **The Medical Transcription Course is in an easy-to-follow, _____ format.**
2. **If you can't find the answer to a Practice Exercise or quiz question, you can look it up because the course is _____.**
3. **As a medical transcriptionist, you take doctors' dictated notes and _____ them.**
4. **It's important to transcribe notes _____ and in a timely manner.**

- 5. _____ allow information to flow between transcriptionists and other staff, records to be accessed remotely from any location and reports to be viewed electronically.
- 6. _____ transcribes dictation into a draft report and allows medical transcriptionists to follow along with the draft report and listen to the dictation.
- 7. Transcription companies may pay for a computer, high-speed Internet access or other equipment, or they'll charge you _____.
- 8. Jack transcribed reports using _____ that were saved in folders on a shared drive.
- 9. EHR stands for _____.
- 10. Disadvantages to speech recognition technology are if the physician _____ it makes it difficult to decipher.
- 11. Transcriptionists and physicians can use a(n) _____ to sign transcribed reports.
- 12. An EHR also is known as a(n) _____.

For questions 13 through 15, write your answer in the spaces provided.

- 13. Explain the basic responsibilities of the medical transcriptionist.

- 14. Explain speech recognition technology.

- 15. Why are you taking this course?

 **Step 8 Review Practice Exercise 1-1**

- Check your answers with the Answer Key at the back of this instruction pack. Correct any mistakes you may have made.

 **Step 9 Lesson Summary**

- This lesson introduced you to medical transcription—both the career and your course. You followed two medical transcriptionists and got a feel for their daily responsibilities. Jenny’s medical transcription responsibilities involved picking up tapes from doctors’ offices, transcribing the dictation into reports and e-mailing the reports back to the doctor’s office. Jack’s medical transcription responsibilities were slightly different than Jenny’s. Instead of picking up tapes like Jenny, Jack logs onto a shared drive from home to access digital files of doctors’ dictation. After Jack is finished typing and editing the reports, he saves it to the patient’s EHR and it goes back to the physician for a signature. The physician opens up the report and signs it electronically.

In addition to learning about careers in medical transcription, you also learned about some technology that’s changing the medical transcription field. Speech recognition technology transcribes dictation into a draft report that medical transcriptionists edit for errors. The medical transcription field continues to evolve as technology enters the field. So the medical transcription field moves forward, which is exciting. There is always something new to learn!

In the next lesson, we’ll dive right into medical transcription skills. You’ll build your transcription knowledge by learning about root words and word parts.

Endnotes

¹ Murphy, G.F., Hanken, M.A. and Waters, K. *Electronic Health Records, Changing the Vision*. Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Company, 1999.

CONGRATULATIONS!

You've completed Lesson 1.

