

Radiation Therapy Technology

Radiation therapy involves the use of differing forms of ionizing radiation for the treatment of benign and malignant tumors. Radiation therapists administer the prescribed dose of ionizing radiation to specific sites of the patient's body as directed by the physician. They operate varied types of equipment, including energy linear accelerators, and work with radioactive materials. In addition, radiation therapists monitor the clinical progress of a patient undergoing radiation therapy, observe the first signs of any complication, and determine when treatment should be withheld until a physician may be consulted.

Careers Specific to the Bachelor's Degree

Upon successful completion of the degree, a graduate is eligible to take the national credential exam in radiation therapy technology and most commonly would be considered for a position as a staff radiation therapist in a hospital or free-standing radiation oncology department. As a staff radiation therapist, primary responsibilities would include administering ionizing radiation for therapeutic purposes, planning treatment procedures, and providing patient support.

Other Career Possibilities with a Bachelor's Degree

Positions in equipment sales and as equipment training specialists. Graduates from baccalaureate degree programs tend to move into upper level positions in radiation oncology departments or hospitals more rapidly than those holding certificate or associate degrees.

Careers that Normally Require a Graduate Degree

Under the new educational standards, program directors are required to hold baccalaureate degrees; however, a master's degree is preferred. Departmental managers tend to hold a master's degree in hospital management. Junior physicists in radiation oncology departments tend to hold a master's degree in health physics.

Job Outlook and Potential Career Growth

Employment opportunities are excellent. Throughout the country, radiation therapists are in great demand. Salaries continue to increase at entry and experience level. Increasing numbers of radiation oncology departments are opening as private free-standing facilities or hospital-owned departments in outpatient facilities. This will increase the need for manpower and management-level skills. Cross training in this field involves utilization of nursing skills in care giving areas.