



HEALTH CAREER OPTIONS GUIDE

for internationally educated health professionals

Pathologist Assistant

This profession is also known as

- medical laboratory assistant
- medical laboratory technician
- pathology assistant
- phlebotomist
- phlebotomy aide etc.



What is a pathologist assistant?

A pathologist assistant is a trained paramedical professional who assists pathologists at autopsies and examinations of surgical specimens. He or she may perform autopsies under a pathologist's supervision.

What are the main duties of a pathologist assistant?

A pathologist assistant performs some or all of the following duties:

- Prepares for autopsies by obtaining patients' medical records and arranging for radiographic examinations
- Assists with or performs autopsies and surgical specimen examinations under pathologists' supervision
- Dissects, examines, weighs and photographs organs and specimens, collects tissue samples for chemical analysis and record findings
- Discards specimens according to established safety procedures
- Cleans and maintains instruments, equipment and supplies
- May prepare bodies for release to funeral homes following completion of autopsies
- May supervise and train junior resident pathologists and morgue attendants

What personal characteristics or desired traits do I need for this profession?

Pathologist assistants:

- Are responsible, dependable, dedicated and willing to keep pace with rapid developments in the field
- Demonstrate keen attention to detail and good manual dexterity
- Are competent in the use of instruments and laboratory technology
- Are able to work comfortably both independently and with others

Where do pathologist assistants Work?

Pathologist assistants are usually employed in hospitals and universities. Some may be employed in private institutions.



What are typical work conditions for a pathologist assistant?

Typically, PAs work a regular 8 hour work day in a laboratory or hospital morgue setting. They may be called in for extra shift work as necessary. Part-time, evening and on-call work is common for individuals just beginning their careers.

What qualifications do I need for this work?

Pathologist assistants require:

- post-secondary courses or a university degree in life sciences and specialized on-the-job training.

Note: The profession is evolving as pathologist assistants assume more of the duties of a pathologist. Some educational institutions offer Master's level programs for pathologist assistants.

Certification with the Certification Council of Pathology Assistants is voluntary at this time but may be mandatory in future.

What communication skills do I need for this work?

As a pathologist assistant, you need:

- Excellent oral and written communication skills to describe and dictate information about the collected samples and specimens for the pathologist
- Strong interpersonal skills and the ability to cooperate with others

For a listing of the essential skills required for this profession, see

http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/es_search-eng.do?titleKeyword=pathology+assistant&source=2&modify=Go%21&noc=3211

What wage can I expect for this work?

- Average hourly rate for pathologist assistant's in Canada is:
Low 21.43 Median 32.15 High 41.00
http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/LMI_report_bynoc.do?noc=3211&reportOption=wage
- Career Outlook
<http://occupations.esdc.gc.ca/sppc-cops/occupationssummarydetail.jsp?tid=134>

Are there opportunities for advancement?

There may be opportunities for advancement such as supervisory roles with experience and continued education.

- Learn more about pathologist assistants by visiting these sites:

National Occupation Code: 3212

The government of Canada has given a code to each occupation/profession. Use this code to learn more about pathologist's assistants through government sites.

- Canadian Certification Council of Pathology Assistants
<https://www.cap-acp.org/CCCPA.php>
- Pathologist Assistant Degree Programs at Canadian Universities
http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/health_sciences/medicine/units/pathology/pathologists_assistant.html
https://www.schulich.uwo.ca/pathol/gps/mclsc_pathologists_assistant/index.html

References:

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<http://www5.hrsdc.gc.ca/NOC/English/NOC/2011/QuickSearch.aspx?val65=3212>
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<https://careers.novascotia.ca/occupation/157>