



## **Overview of Medical Transcription Work**

Medical transcription is the act of translating from oral to written form the record of a person's medical history, diagnosis, treatment, prognosis, and outcome. Although limited information is available on the size of the industry, it is estimated that \$15 billion is generated annually in revenues based on the number of transcribed lines produced per year. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports about 98,000 jobs were held in the U.S. by medical transcriptionists in 2006, however AHDI/MTIA estimate upward of 300,000 factoring in production estimates, overseas labor, independent contractors, and those practicing medical transcription who also hold other job titles.

Medical transcriptionists play a critical role in the healthcare delivery process by interpreting and translating dictated health information into a useable written and/or electronic format. Physicians and other healthcare providers use digital dictation recorder systems to dictate and transmit confidential healthcare information and encounters concerning their patients over secured, encrypted telephone or internet lines.

Medical transcriptionists or documentation specialists interpret and transcribe dictated reports by recording and editing dictated material for clinical accuracy and grammatical clarity into comprehensive records that accurately communicate medical information. Reports of patient care take many forms, including pre-admission history and physical examinations, progress reports, emergency department notes, consultations, operative reports, discharge summaries, clinic notes, referral letters, radiology reports, pathology reports, and an array of documentation spanning more than 60 medical specialties.

The industry is moving toward electronic health records, allowing storage of an individual's health information in electronic format so that physicians and other healthcare providers can access this information from anywhere. Transcribed reports or healthcare documents become part of the medico-legal record used for communication among healthcare providers and is the basis for processing healthcare reimbursements by medical coders and billers. Therefore, accurate, reliable, and complete transcribed documents help prevent medical errors, improve patient safety, and facilitate the coding and billing process for public and private health insurance programs.

Medical transcriptionists use their talents in a variety of healthcare settings, including doctor's offices, public and private hospitals, teaching hospitals, medical schools, medical transcription businesses, clinics, laboratories, pathology and radiology departments, insurance companies, medical libraries, government medical facilities, rehabilitation centers, research centers, veterinary medical facilities, and associations representing the healthcare industry. Even though medical transcription services are used in multiple healthcare settings, it is estimated that over 50% of medical transcription service is outsourced from these facilities to medical transcription service organizations (MTSOs).

Additionally, there is a growing trend to perform medical transcription working from home as either an employee or independent contractor, employed or contracted by the healthcare provider or MTSO. A recent survey of 3,800 medical transcriptionists, conducted by Bentley College and supported by AHDI/MTIA, found 72% of respondents working from home. Many MTSOs are based outside the U.S. and the U.S.-based MTSOs frequently subcontract with transcriptionists outside the U.S. (e.g., India,

Pakistan, and the Philippines). It is not uncommon for an independent contractor transcriptionist to work for multiple healthcare providers or MTSOs. Consequently, managing and ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements is a significant challenge.

### **Additional Information**

**AHDI Website:** <http://www.ahdionline.org/scriptcontent/index.cfm>

AHDI, formerly AAMT, has been the professional organization representing medical transcriptionists since 1978. AHDI sets standards of practice and education for medical transcriptionists, administers a certification program, has established a code of ethics, and advocates on behalf of the profession. There are over 135 component associations of AHDI, each of which holds regular educational meetings and symposia.

**MTIA Website:** <http://www.mtia.com/>

MTIA is the world's largest trade association serving medical transcription service operators. Its mission is to create an environment in which medical transcription companies can prosper, grow, and deliver the highest level of healthcare documentation services.

**Health Story Project:** <http://www.healthstory.com>

Health Story is an alliance of healthcare vendors, providers and associations, including AHDI and MTIA, that pooled resources over the previous two years in a rapid-development initiative called "CDA4CDT" (Clinical Document Architecture for Common Data Types) to produce data standards for the flow of information between common types of healthcare documents and electronic health records.

**Dictation Best Practices Toolkit:** <http://www.ahdionline.org/scriptcontent/DBP.cfm>

The Dictation Best Practices Tool Kit is designed to assist facilities with the adoption and implementation of policies and training practices that will promote high quality dictation and ensure the best documentation outcomes.

**White Paper: "Transcription Turnaround Time for Common Document Types":**

[http://library.ahima.org/xpedio/groups/public/documents/ahima/bok1\\_039584.pdf](http://library.ahima.org/xpedio/groups/public/documents/ahima/bok1_039584.pdf)

The American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) and MTIA Joint Task Force on Standards Development convened to examine and research the topic of turnaround time (TAT) of transcribed reports under the premise that currently there are very few standards for TAT. This white paper discussed the current state of the industry relative to TAT for selected work types. It also provides commentary on how changes to TAT may impact operational efficiency, enrich data capture and documentation, further empower clinical decision making, and enhance patient care.

**White Paper: "A Standard Unit of Measure for Transcribed Reports":**

[http://library.ahima.org/xpedio/groups/public/documents/ahima/bok1\\_034023.html](http://library.ahima.org/xpedio/groups/public/documents/ahima/bok1_034023.html)

The AHIMA/MTIA Joint Task Force on Standards Development convened to recommend a standard unit of measure for medical transcription of patient medical records.