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Industry Snapshots

Surgical Technologist Tools for the Program Developer

This data was prepared for California Community Colleges and those professionals that design college-level coursework and programs.



Industry Background

Surgical Technologists were one of the six allied health occupations with the highest growing demand, in a 2008 study of Allied Health in Los Angeles County, prepared by the Centers of Excellence. As a key member of the surgical team, Surgical Technologists work most often in hospitals and surgery centers. Surgical Technologists see that the operative procedure is conducted under optimal conditions. Before the surgery they may prepare the patients, facilities, and instruments. During the surgery they may assist by passing instruments, checking vital signs, and handling specimens. After surgery they may help clean the operating room and move patients to recovery rooms.

Factors affecting the demand for Surgical Technologists include the growing number and complexity of surgical procedures, the shortage of operating room nurses, the aging population which requires more surgical procedures, the retirement of baby-boomers from the allied health workforce, and the current recession, which forces more people into the public health care system, where they tend to develop more serious conditions and require more surgical interventions.

California does not require certification or licensure of Surgical Technologists. Two national organizations offer voluntary certifications, and many employers prefer these. Existing programs in Los Angeles County are all operated by private, proprietary schools, and vary in length. None are at community colleges. Some, but not all, programs provide supervised clinical practice.

Employers who were surveyed for this study indicated that it is not difficult to find inexperienced Surgical Technologists, but it is "difficult" or "very difficult" to hire experienced candidates. Employers prefer candidates who are certified, and some employers pay higher wages to employees who maintain their credential. Eight of the 11 employers who provided input for the study stated that there was a need for a community college degree or certificate programs, in Los Angeles County.

Study recommendations include the development of a basic certificate program for Surgical Technologists and an advanced program, possibly awarding an AA-Degree, for certified Technologists to advance to the Surgical Assistant level. There are currently no accredited programs for Surgical Assistants in California. A community college would be the appropriate place for the first such program, and would provide access to this growing occupation for a wide variety of students.



Industry Trends

Description	Jobs in L.A. County	Growth in job openings (5 yrs)	2009 Median Hourly Earnings	Licenses/ Certification Required
Surgical Technologists http://online.onetcenter.org/link/summary/29-2055.00	2419	15%	\$20.75	Certification is voluntary, not required in California. Two certifications are available: 1. Certified Surgical Technologist (CST) from the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA). 2. Technologist in Surgery – Certified (TS-C) from the National Center for Competency Testing (NCCT).

Description & Reference Information

Here's What Surgical Technologists Do

(More detailed job descriptions and occupational information can be accessed at ONET Online <http://online.onetcenter.org/find/>)

Surgical Technologists are commonly known as scrubs or operating room technicians. They work as part of a team with doctors and nurses in all aspects of a wide variety of operative settings. Their job is to see that the operative procedure is conducted under optimal conditions. Before surgery, they may prepare the patients, facilities, and instruments. During surgery they may assist by passing instruments, checking vital signs, and handling specimens. After surgery they may help clean the operating room and move patients to recovery rooms.

Educational Track

Here is the California community college that offers Surgical Technologist Industry programs.

College	Degree Programs
Mira Costa College http://www.miracosta.cc.ca.us/	Certificate of Achievement – Surgical Technology

Conclusions and Recommendations

Although Surgical Technology is currently unlicensed and unregulated, there are numerous reasons to establish an AA-degree program in Surgical Technology for Los Angeles County. Changes in the regulatory environment that are being pushed by the professional organizations, along with support from employers who were surveyed, provide a positive atmosphere for establishing a community college program for Surgical Technologists and Surgical Assistants in Los Angeles County.

Recommendations

- Create a Community College Program
- Create Programs for Surgical Technology Specialties and Surgical Assistants
- Develop Community College Programs as Career Ladders

