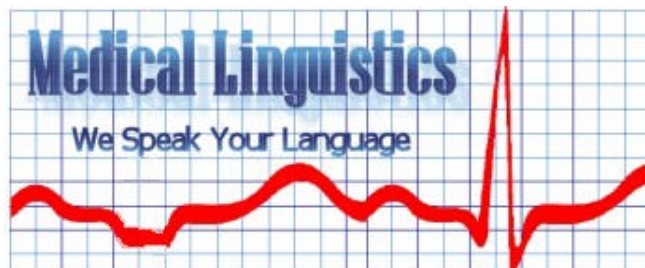


Medical Linguistics

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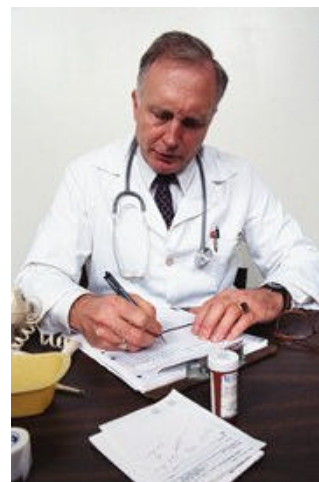


Medical Transcription—Is It Right For You?

First things first. To know if medical transcription is right for you, you must know what medical transcription is (I will get into what it is **not** later). Medical transcription, defined simply, is the process by which one transcribes (or types) dictation completed by a healthcare professional. Dictation is when a physician or other healthcare professional speaks into a machine, either digitally recorded or tape-recorded, and gives details regarding their patients' treatment, care, history, etc. For every procedure, visit, and encounter, there most likely will be, and should be, a dictation associated, including simple telephone conversations with a physician's office.



The reason for so much dictation is simple—**documentation**. Healthcare professionals are required to document their encounters for many reasons: to ensure continuity and quality of patient care, liability reasons, and the list goes on. A good example of how a well-documented physician's office visit might be to you would be as follows. Let's say you have gone to establish care with a new primary care physician. During this process, of course, most physicians take a detailed history, including allergies, medications you are taking, past surgeries, past medical problems, etc. These details are usually dictated for later transcription and placement into your chart. Because this information is in your chart, it is available to your physician as a reference point. Therefore, it makes the likelihood of your healthcare professional prescribing a drug you are allergic to quite low, as he/she has your allergies documented in your chart. It also enables your doctor to proceed with treatment without the need for you to reiterate your history over and over with each visit because he has your past history documented in your chart for his reference. You then are then required only to relate things that have changed in your history in the interim since the documentation of your history (and it is very important that you do this as well).



Now here is what medical transcription is **not**. I am guessing that those commercials offering to teach medical transcription via a self-paced program are aired across the United States. I know I see them here in Tennessee all of the time. As for commenting on the efficacy of those

transcribed with the rules of English applied. Not as simple as it sounds. Many times, dictators sneeze, cough, and yawn in the middle of a sentence and keep on talking as if nothing happened. They are often interrupted by beeps, phone calls, and staff, and when they come back to dictate, they have lost their train of thought and, in the process, repeat some things already said. This does not mean that dictators do not care how they come across. It's just that many times they are rushed and quite tired, so they are unaware that they are inaudible or redundant.

In addition to the above, a good medical transcriptionist should be trustworthy enough to draw a blank line for the dictator to fill in or to ask the dictator regarding such should he/she not know or be unfamiliar with what was dictated. Each document transcribed generally has the transcriptionist's initials and/or assigned MT# at the bottom of the report for easy reference. I would certainly want to do my very best work since it could so easily come back on me, wouldn't you? Having done QA (quality assurance) for many years now, I cannot express to you how valuable it is to have an MT that I **know** will blank something if he/she is not sure of what it should be. Blank lines in a transcription document tells me that the transcriptionist was sure of the accuracy of the rest of the transcription and further assures me that the quality of the transcription is high.



I am now going to talk a little bit about the money you can make doing medical transcription. Let's face it. We work because we have to. While there are a privileged few who work to get out of the house or to have some extra spending money, most work because the bills must be paid.

Medical transcription is a profession with excellent moneymaking potential. If you are an excellent transcriptionist who is conscientious and has the qualities I described above, you could practically go to Timbuktu and find a job. Good transcriptionists are in demand almost everywhere. The MT who genuinely cares about his/her work and is well-rounded in all specialties, grammar, etc., is a rare find, and employers appreciate excellence. If your employer does not realize what a find he/she has, believe me, there are those who will know and would love to have you aboard. As a transcription company owner, I know firsthand about the almost impossible task of finding someone who turns out quality work. If I find someone like that, **I know it and let them know I appreciate them**

One big factor in the amount of money you make in transcription is how fast you can type; however, let me make this **perfectly clear** – **never sacrifice quality for quantity**, no matter how badly you want to increase your paycheck. Speed comes with time and practice, so get your quality down first. It does not matter if you can transcribe 1000 documents a day. If the quality is bad and the report does not represent a true and adequate medical document, your effort has been wasted. In general, the faster you can type accurately, the more money you will make because most MTs are paid per line. The definition of a line differs with each employer, but can be defined as 65 characters (some consider spaces a character, some do not) or as a gross line (anything on the line is a line. For example, a three-line address would be considered three lines). Many companies also have an incentive scale, meaning once you reach a certain number of lines for that pay period, your pay per line goes up - sometimes retroactive to the first line, sometimes not. Most medical transcription employers pay according to experience, quality, etc., but a good estimate of range is from 0.06 cents to 0.10 cents per line. These values swing widely



depending on the demographics of where you live – big city, rural area, rate of unemployment, etc. If you are getting paid on a gross line, your line rate is going to be lower because it is easier to get your line count. If you are getting paid on a character line, your line rate will be higher for the opposite reason. Either way, it will equal out. Most employers also require that you meet “production,” which is a certain amount of minutes of dictation, lines of dictation, and so on that they expect you to consistently complete each day.

While on the subject of production and typing speed, let me mention that almost all transcriptionists use a word expander program when they transcribe. It is much like typing in shorthand or using a macro in a word processor. For instance, I know I am going to type “the



patient” hundreds of times in a day, so rather than having to type those words out each time, I enter the phrase into my word expansion program to correspond to “tp.” As I type, the shorthand “tp” is automatically rendered “the patient” as I type. I have saved myself nine keystrokes. If you have a dictator who says the exact same thing in a particular part of a report, you can even put that paragraph into your word expander. For instance, if a Dr. Jones dictates the same thing for examinations

that are absolutely normal, you could store it as “jonespe.” Then, when you type “jonespe,” Dr. Jones’ entire normal physical exam spits out. Keep in mind that it is always a good idea to listen to the physical examination all the way through anyway. I know, I know. You’ve heard it 100 times, however, Dr. Jones may just add something in to that normal physical examination, so it is very important that you listen to the entire dictation anyway.

I hope that I have answered most of the questions you have regarding the field of medical transcription and that I have cleared up a few myths. Perhaps I have given you incentive to check transcription out further as a career. There are many rewards in this career, especially personal ones. It is a wonderful feeling to present a document that is error-free, knowing that you have contributed to a patient’s care and the continuity and reliability of such. Medical transcription is a community in many ways. We stand by one another and, as in many occupations, we work as a team. There is a feeling of camaraderie in this profession. Medical transcription and causes associated with it as a career are wonderfully represented by its own organization, AAMT (American Association for Medical Transcription), and transcriptionists have the opportunity to become a CMT (certified medical transcriptionist) through them. The AAMT has an excellent website, www.aamt.org, so check it out and read more about some of the things transcription has to offer.

If you wish to further investigate the possibility of becoming an MT or if you know already that is what you want to do, check out Medical Linguistics’ medical transcription program. We are continually expanding our program and have put much effort into making this program successful at turning out phenomenal medical transcriptionists. Most of our lessons can be purchased either separately or as a package, and we accept credit cards as well as personal checks. Check back often for additions to our offerings.

I wish you much luck in all of your endeavors and, should you decide to become a medical transcriptionist, look forward to our being colleagues one day!

Kimberly McLaughlin