

## Health Careers You Hadn't Thought Of...But Should!

Ask the average guy on the street who works in health careers and you'll probably hear "doctors and nurses." While these are the traditional careers associated with health care, today the industry is supported by many, many different professionals. Like their nursing counterparts, the demand for their services continues to grow as the baby boomers reach retirement age.

Medical assistants, respiratory therapists, and clinical laboratory technicians are three such careers that are projected to have strong growth in the next 10 years. Each career offers unusual challenges and unique rewards.

**Medical assistants** help in physician or other health care offices. According to Bonnie Murphy, program director at ICC, "Medical assistants are cross-trained to perform both the administrative and clinical duties in a medical office. These duties vary depending on the size and type of office they work in, but might include answering phones, scheduling appointments, and managing medical records."

ICC offers two tracks for medical assistants. The medical office assistant program is geared for students who want to be involved in "office functions," while the new medical assistant program gives students the skills to help physicians with clinical functions, including assisting with exams, taking EKGs, drawing blood, and removing sutures. The new program, which is pending state approval, begins this fall and is designed to allow students to finish in four semesters (fall-spring-summer-fall.)

### Respiratory therapists

provide care for patients with heart and lung disorders. According to Kelly Crawford-Jones, program coordinator at ICC, "Our students are unique; they must be able to think fast for emergencies, yet, they must have a great deal of compassion in order to work with all kinds of patients, from the elderly and dying to the newborn and neonates." Crawford-Jones notes that most respiratory therapists work in hospitals, but many "work with patients in their homes, assessing the patients and doing patient education."

ICC's respiratory therapist program is a 70-credit-hour program (approximately two years) and results in and associate in applied science degree.

Carrie Salmon of Washington will graduate May 2008 from the respiratory therapy program. She was drawn to the program because of her interest in helping a friend with muscular dystrophy who needed care for his tracheotomy. She also wanted to find a short-term program that she could complete and enter the workforce.

As a single mom, Carrie made big sacrifices to enter and complete the program. "In the summer of 2005, I sold my house and all my belongings so I could go back to school," she says. After taking pre-requisite courses for one year, she started the respiratory therapy program, and now, two years later, is ready to graduate.

The motivation that led to selling her house and belongings, even the piano that she loved, was to

provide a better life for herself and her two daughters – Olivia and Savannah. "I tell them a lot. They know that the reason we live in this little apartment and Mommy works so hard is so we can have a better life," she explains.

"I knew without an education, the jobs I was finding were not secure and were not what I wanted to do," she says. "I wanted to help people... help them in a medical way. Eventually I will be doing something that will make me feel good about myself and the work I'm doing."

And the two years have not been easy ones. "It's hard to have a normal routine," she says. "This week I have second shift clinicals."

She credits family and friends with helping her manage irregular hours and family responsibilities and looks forward to starting her job at OSF after she graduates. In fact, she says that idea is almost surreal. "I can't imagine not studying for exams and writing papers. I'm excited, but I can't even imagine it."

### Clinical Laboratory Technicians

(CLTs) are the staff behind the diagnosis. Clinical laboratory technicians perform tests to help find the causes of illnesses and disease. They typically work in the laboratories of hospitals, clinics or health care facilities and assist in performing in specialized lab areas like microbiology, urinalysis, hematology, and chemistry and/or work in blood banking and phlebotomy (drawing blood for tests).

According to Anh Strow, program director, "Seventy-five to eighty percent of medical decisions made by physicians are based on information provided by the analyses from the clinical lab professionals." Strow added that people who become CLTs are "individuals who enjoy learning about the human body and diseases and disorders or who like to solve puzzles."

That is what drew James Messmer, Washington, to the program. "I have always had an interest in science," he says. "I wanted something that was interesting and I was challenged by."

Messmer sought a second career two years into his retirement from a 26-year career as owner of an automotive customizing business. "I was facing boredom and was looking for something to fit my own interests personally and financially," he says. "I wanted to get into the workforce rapidly." And he could complete the 68-credit-hour program in just two years.

Although he describes the program as intense, he said the classroom experience was great. "I liked the scientific format. It was hard work, and you must apply yourself," he says. "I had no problem. I did not have to work a job so I could concentrate on studying."

Four years into his career as a clinical lab technologist with BroMenn in Bloomington, Messmer believes the classroom preparation paid off. "The program was excellent preparation for the job. Anyone who is motivated with the right work ethic should succeed in this career field," he says.

Today as a working professional, he says he performs hundreds of tests on all types of bodily fluids and samples and finds himself working in various departments – hematology (analyzing unusual or abnormal blood), blood bank (determining blood type or performing screening), chemistry (drug screening or checking therapeutic levels), microbiology (performing cultures on bodily fluids), and others.

Messmer chose the clinical laboratory technology program because he wanted to play a part in the healing process but he didn't want to deal with the trials and sadness that sometimes accompanies an ill or recovering patient.

ICC's CLT program offers some online components which allow students the flexibility to work on class assignments from any computer with Internet access without coming into the classroom everyday.

ICC currently has openings in the fall classes for qualified students in each of these careers. For more information, contact the Health Careers Department at phone (309) 999-4600 or (309) 999-4601. ■

## ICC Offers Classes to Fit Every Need!

For a class schedule, go online to [www.icc.edu](http://www.icc.edu), or complete the form below, enclose in an envelope, and mail to:

**Illinois Central College Marketing Services**  
1 College Drive, East Peoria, IL 61635

or call (309) 694-5-ICC or e-mail your request to [info@icc.edu](mailto:info@icc.edu).

- Send me a current Class Schedule!** [www.icc.edu](http://www.icc.edu)
- Send me the PDI Computer Training Schedule!** [www.icc.edu/pdi](http://www.icc.edu/pdi)  
indicate which version:  Workshops for computer administrators or programmers who maintain, support, or develop software for computers or computer networks  
– OR –  Workshops for users looking to learn or improve their skills with software programs such as Microsoft Office, Dreamweaver, and Crystal Reports

**Add me to the ICC FUNshops<sup>SM</sup> Mailing List** [www.icc.edu/funshops](http://www.icc.edu/funshops)

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

What are your academic interests (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

COMPLETE THIS FORM, ENCLOSE IN ENVELOPE, AND MAIL TO:

Illinois Central College, Marketing Services  
1 College Drive, East Peoria, Illinois 61635-0001

### ICC Lands \$1 Million Federal Grant to Boost Health Career Education

With more than 4,000 new jobs projected through 2014 in health careers in the Peoria area, ICC has teamed with local leaders in healthcare, workforce, and education to secure a grant totaling \$2 million from the U.S. Department of Labor through the President's Community-Based Job Training Grants Initiative.

ICC will receive \$1.1 million of the grant to support education, equipment, materials, and facility enhancements. Specifically, funds will provide for hiring new faculty as well as converting existing courses to distance learning which will make the courses accessible to more students. ICC will focus on reducing skills shortages among registered nurses, surgical technicians, and medical assistants.

Other grant partners include OSF Saint Francis Medical Center, Methodist Medical Center, Workforce Network and Career Link, Peoria District 150, and Heartland Community College. The collaboration of ICC and other central Illinois organizations was one of 69 community-based initiatives chosen from the 341 applications received nationwide.