

Every time health care personnel treat a patient, they record what they observed, and how the patient was treated medically. This record includes information the patient provides concerning their symptoms and medical history, the results of examinations, reports of x rays and laboratory tests, diagnoses, and treatment plans. **Medical Records** and **Health Information Technicians** organize and evaluate these records for completeness and accuracy.

Medical records and health information technicians begin to assemble patients' health information by first making sure their initial medical charts are complete. They ensure all forms are completed and properly identified and signed, and all necessary information is in the computer. Sometimes, they communicate with physicians or others to clarify diagnoses or get additional information.

Technicians assign a code to each diagnosis and procedure. They consult classification manuals and rely, also, on their knowledge of disease processes. Technicians then use a software program to assign the patient to one of several hundred "diagnosis-related groups," or DRG's. The DRG determines the amount the hospital will be reimbursed if the patient is covered by Medicare or other insurance programs using the DRG system. Technicians who specialize in coding are called **Health Information Coders, Medical Record Coders, Coder/Abstractors,** or **Coding Specialists**. In addition to the DRG system, coders use other coding systems, such as those geared towards ambulatory settings.

Technicians also use computer programs to tabulate and analyze data to help improve patient care, control costs, for use in legal actions, in response to surveys, or for use in research studies. **Tumor Registrars** compile and maintain records of patients who have cancer to provide information to physicians and for research studies.

### Salary Information:

- Health Information Technology, Associate in Applied Science  
\$33,800 Median Salary (Follow-up Study, Monroe Community College Graduates, 2008)
- Medical Records and Health Information Technician  
\$32,960 Median Salary (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008)
- **Medical Record Coders for the Rochester, New York area:**  
\$30,400 Median Salary Range (Career One Stop, 2008)

[\*Salary varies based on education/advanced degree, work-experience & setting/location.]

### Additional Information:

- American Health Information Management Association: [www.ahima.org](http://www.ahima.org)

