



## Does Paying for Certification Make an Insured More Marketable?

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Does Paying for Certification Make an Insured More Marketable? It is often tempting to think that additional training or confirmation of an industry certification will help an insured to become more marketable; however it is typically not that simple. Take as a case study this consultant's recent experience with a Phlebotomist, who was told to seek sedentary employment when her disability precluded her for standing long periods at a time. The insured was in her mid-fifties with little prior job search experience and a dislike of commuting more than a short distance. Therefore, she decided she would like to be a Certified Medical

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Transcriptionist (CMT) so she could work from home. Needless to say, this vocational goal was not based on a review of:

- *her transferable skills* (her computer skills were only fair, and her typing speed was definitely under 30 WPM)
  - *an accurate understanding of the experience required in this occupation* (see below, an individual is not qualified to sit for the certification exam until they have completed at least 2 years of experience as Medical Transcriptionist or RMT)
  - *a review of her local labor market* (while there actually was some current opportunity for an RMT and/or a CMT, the insured had not done any research on job availability before choosing her employment goal)
- research on future labor market trends* (as we move to electronic medical records, the demand for CMTs is expected to plummet).

This article will highlight current thinking that helps those in rehabilitation and risk management evaluate the impact of certification programs. They are not always the right answer and a lot of money, time, and effort can be spent to learn that lesson the hard way.

At The Sierra Group, we follow employment trends and share labor market insights and analysis through our *Occupational Alert* newsletters to help keep those in the rehabilitation profession informed and aware of how to leverage information to control risk and assist with return to work efforts. The Sierra Group is a national consultancy that offers an array of vocational rehabilitation, recruiting, consulting, and training services designed to serve the needs of insurance companies, businesses, and workers with disabilities.

### **Case Study of the Certified Medical Transcriptionist (CMT)**

Sierra's research indicated that RMT- Registered Medical Transcriptionist is the designation for newer Medical Transcriptionists who do not have 2 years of experience in the field and/or those who have not had experience transcribing within an acute care setting. To be a CMT, the trainee requires in-depth knowledge of medical terminology, anatomy, medical procedures/treatments and pharmacology — as well as a high degree of attention to detail.

The CMT designation is reserved for experienced professionals who have at least 2 years of experience, direct experience within an acute care setting, experience transcribing surgical procedures, experience handling multiple types of transcription and experience transcribing for varied practitioners (both those where English is their first language and those where it is not).

In addition, given the mandate to move to electronic medical records (EMRs) that will then be consolidated into a patient's central electronic health record (EHR) the future role of Medical Transcriptionists is unclear. The Association for Healthcare Documentation Integrity (AHDI – formerly known as the American Association of Medical Transcriptionists or AAMT), reports that there is no clear understanding of how transcription will change in the new EHR environment. However, Sierra is of the opinion that the association's actions speak loudly. That is to say that they obviously

see significant change coming, as they 1.) changed their name, 2.) started an initiative to outline and assist in the support of the electronic transcription process going into the EHR process, and 3.) they freely admit that they are focused on identifying a role for Medical Transcriptionists. Indeed, it is a clear indication that the general consensus is that tapes and paper transcription will inevitably succumb to digital records.

The move to EHRs was mandated by President Bush, and is now overseen by the US Department of Health and Human Services. The goal of AHDI's EHR Initiative is to provide resources and better understanding of how a future centralized depository for electronic healthcare records can be established and maintained, as the association feels this may assist Medical Transcriptionists to protect their own interests in maintaining a role in the documentation and data formulation process. Beyond the next few years of this process, it is hoped that this pro-active approach will help Medical Transcriptionists to be seen as specialists in health data analysis to allow for an ongoing role into the future.

### **What does this mean to those managing disability claims?**

Several things - First, it is important to understand the insured's reasoning in selecting a particular employment goal, and second it is very important to clarify if said goal is viable given the insured's transferable skills and - finally and perhaps more importantly, the future trends of the industry matter more than anything else.

### **References:**

"Becoming a Certified Medical Transcriptionist" [www.MTWorld.com](http://www.MTWorld.com)

"Healthcare and the Electronic IT Revolution" <http://ahdionline.org>

Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology, [www.hhs.gov/healthit.org](http://www.hhs.gov/healthit.org)

eHealth Initiative, [www.ehealthinitiative.org](http://www.ehealthinitiative.org)