

Frequently Asked Questions about Diagnostic Medical Sonography

Q: Where do sonographers work?

A: Sonographers are employed by hospital, imaging centers and private physician offices. New graduates will be employed primarily in the hospital setting.

Q: What are the duties of a sonographer?

A: A sonographer

- Performs procedures to obtain diagnostic images to be read by a physician.
- Obtains and record accurate patient history
- Analyzes technical information
- Provides quality patient care
- Works as part of the health care team

Q: What is a typical day in the life of a sonographer?

A: A sonographer usually works an eight-hour shift and during that time completes 10-12 ultrasound scans along with required paperwork and documentation. This involves interaction with patients, physicians and other health care professionals. The sonographer provides quality patient care. Ultrasound cases can be “added on” to the schedule each day, and then sonographers will be required to work additional hours. Schedule changes play a role in the stressful demands of the career.

Q: Part of the sonography career includes being “on call”. What does that mean?

A: Depending upon the facility, sonographers will be required to carry a beeper and be called back in to the department after hours, weekends, and holidays. For example if your shift is over at 4:30 pm, you could drive home and be beeped back to the hospital at 9 pm, return home to sleep and be beeped again at 3 am to return to the hospital and then you are still required to be at work at 8 am.

Q: What role do sonographers play in patient care?

A: Sonographers must take care of the patient while in the department. The sonographer may deal with patient issues such as vomiting, bleeding etc.

Q: Do sonographers deal with needles, blood, and/or bodily fluids?

A: Yes, sonographers are patient care givers and indeed deal with all these items and also go to the ER, ICU, and OR.

Q: How competitive is the DMS program?

A: We have had 20-40 applicants for the 10 positions, so it is very competitive. Check out the [Admitted Students Profile](#) at www.hacc.edu under Health Careers (Admission Criteria). This is why it’s important to work closely with your advisor.

Q: Can the DMS program be completed part time?

A: No, a full time commitment is required.

Q: Is there a national or state certification or credentialing examination that is required after graduation in order to be employed?

A: Yes, you will be hired with a stipulation that you are required to pass three American Registry for Diagnostic Medical Sonography® ([ARDMS](#)) credentialing exams. Sonography Principles and Instrumentation, Abdomen, and Obstetrics and Gynecology. Most facilities allow up to one year to pass these exams. Each exam costs \$200 and is not included in the program. Check out the ARDMS web site www.ardms.org.

Q: Is the DMS program at HACC accredited?

A: Yes, HACC’s Diagnostic Medical Sonography (DMS) program is accredited by the [Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs \(CAAHEP\)](#), 1361 Park Street, Clearwater, FL 33756, Phone: 727-210-2350, Fax: 727-210-2354. Check out the CAAHEP web site www.caahep.org.

Q: What is the job market like?

A: Nationally there is a great demand for DMS professionals; however the job market in central Pennsylvania may be limited due to the number of graduates in the area.

Q: Where would I do my clinical rotations?

A: Faculty assigns you to an imaging facility for specific learning outcomes; students do not get to choose locations. Students change clinical sites each semester. Sites can be as far as 80 miles from Harrisburg. (As you plan your finances for the program, please keep in mind the cost of gas and auto expenses as you are required to drive to the sites for your clinical rotation.)

Q: When I had my ultrasound the sonographer sat and moved the wand around? Is the job physically demanding?

A: Yes, you are on your feet most of the day. You need to be able to help transfer patients from wheelchairs to stretchers, move ultrasound equipment to other hospital areas, and assist as needed in the hospital.

Q: Sonographers image babies all day, right?

A: Actually sonographers image many parts of the body - organs of the abdomen: liver, kidneys, pancreas, spleen, gallbladder; organs of the pelvis: uterus, ovaries, prostate; glandular organs: breast, thyroid, testicles. Also the vascular system is imaged by sonographers. Procedures such as transvaginal imaging are a major part of the imaging day. Sonographers assist with biopsies and other procedures including cases in the operating room.