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Clinical photography

Clinical photography is the daily recording of clinical conditions presented by patients and is used for diagnosis or for recording a condition during the stages of treatment.

As a clinical photographer, you'll provide different types of images to assist with diagnosing and treating patients. This can include specialised imagery such as thermography, 3D and ultra violet imaging as well as standard digital photography. Some clinical photographers also undertake videography.



Clinical photographers work in a medical illustration department as an important part of the healthcare team. They work closely with doctors, healthcare scientists, nurses and other healthcare professionals associated with the delivery of care.



Most clinical photographers are hospital based and usually work in a studio or within clinics, operating theatres or on wards. Some work in the community.

Working life

You will provide essential professional and cost-effective photographic and graphic services for use in:

- patient care
- medical education
- research
- specialised techniques - for example in ophthalmic imaging, you'll use fluorescein angiography (which is used to delineate retinal blood vessels) and the production of images for treatment planning in craniofacial surgery and surgical audit
- providing photographic and other visual records of patients and pathological materials. These provide valuable aids in early diagnosis or for confirming the effective treatment of disease.

In small medical illustration departments, you might have a broader range of responsibilities and duties, such as graphic design.

You'll be providing different types of images to assist with the diagnosis and treatment of patients.

So in addition to clinical photography, you might:

- use basic graphic design skills, such as in the production of audio visual teaching or lecture material, artwork for scientific posters and patient information
- be responsible for the design and layout of annual reports and other corporate material.

Who will I work with?

You'll work with a range of people, depending on your precise role. These could include surgeons [1], nurses [2] and other clinical staff, but you might also work with communications staff [3], for example.

In larger medical illustration departments, you might work alongside, and in collaboration with, graphic designers and video producers who will undertake this work.

Want to learn more?

- Find out more about the entry requirements, skills and interests required to enter a career in clinical photography [4]

- Find out more about the training you'll receive for a career in clinical photography [5]

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Pay and conditions

Most jobs in the NHS are covered by the Agenda for Change (AfC) [6] pay scales. This pay system covers all staff except doctors, dentists and the most senior managers. In clinical photography, you'll typically start on AfC [7] band 5. With experience and further training, you can apply for more senior posts.

Staff will usually work a standard 37.5 hours per week. They may work a shift pattern.

Terms and conditions of service can vary for employers outside the NHS.

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Where the role can lead

With further training or experience or both, you may be able to develop your career further and apply for vacancies in areas such as further specialisation, management, research, or teaching.

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Job market and vacancies

Finding and applying for jobs

When you're looking for job or apprenticeship vacancies, there are a number of sources you can use, depending on the type of work you're seeking.

Check vacancies carefully to be sure you can meet the requirements of the person specification before applying and to find out what the application process is. You may need to apply online or send a CV for example.

Key sources relevant to vacancies in the health sector:

- Vacancies in organisations delivering NHS healthcare can be found on the NHS Jobs website [8]
- Opportunities in the Civil Service can be found on the Civil Service Jobs website [9]
- Vacancies in local government can be found on the Local Government Jobs website [10] and the Jobs Go Public website [11]

As well as these sources, you may find suitable vacancies in the health sector by contacting local employers directly, searching in local newspapers and by using the Universal Jobmatch tool [12].

Find out more about applications and interviews [13].

Many clinical photography departments offer work experience or placements within their department to provide an insight into the profession and boost your CV. Contact the clinical photography department at your local trust to see if they offer work experience.

Further information

For further information about training and working in clinical photography, please contact:

- Institute of Medical Illustrators [14]
- British Institute of Professional Photography [15]
- Committee for the Accreditation of Medical Illustrations Practitioners and Academy for Healthcare Science [16]
- UCAS [17]

Other roles that may interest you

- Art therapist/art psychotherapist [18]
- Communications and corporate affairs [19]
- Clinical bioinformatics health informatics [20]
- Cellular sciences [21]

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