

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Ophthalmic Medical Technologist Training Program

Q: Who is the sponsor of the Ophthalmic Technologist Training Program (OMTTP)?

A: Stanton Territorial Health Authority in Yellowknife, NT, Canada.

Q: Where does the program take place?

A: The program is run out of the Stanton Territorial Health Authority Eye Clinic for the majority of the program. Throughout their training each student also accompanies a Technician/Technologist as they travel to many communities in the NWT and Nunavut. At the end of their training, students also spend approximately 10 days at various ophthalmology specialties in Edmonton, Alberta.

Q: What is the cost to take the program?

A: Currently, there is no tuition cost for this program. However, the student is responsible for all living expenses. While students are on travel clinics outside of Yellowknife, all expenses (hotels, taxis, airline tickets and per diems) are covered by the Stanton Territorial Health Authority.

Q: Why do you only take a few students per year?

A: The OMTTP only takes in a maximum of two to three students every two years to ensure the one-on-one training model is maintained. It also allows the students to participate in travel clinics to the communities which are an extremely valuable, but costly, training opportunity. Fewer students also provide the optimal learning situation in the classroom portion of the Program.

Q: Is there an age limit for applying?

A: No. The program seeks individuals who may be right out of high school to mature adults who are committed and would like to stay and work in the North.

Q: What are the entrance requirements?

A: The minimum requirement for entrance into the program is completion of high school. Post-secondary education is not required but may be advantageous. Courses in math, sciences, psychology or the medical field can be beneficial.

Everything that needs to be learned is offered either within the program or through an outside college or university.

Q: How long is the program?

A: The duration of the program is two years, from September to June each year. Students are off for two months in the summer of the first year and are encouraged to seek ophthalmic-related summer employment.

Q: What are the program hours?

A: Students are expected to attend the program from 8:15 to 4:30 pm Monday to Friday, when in the Yellowknife clinic. While on travel clinics outside of Yellowknife, students are required to train through weekends and evenings.

Q: Where do I go to see the facilities?

A: A tour date and time will be arranged for you to visit the Stanton Territorial Health Authority – Eye Clinic located on the first floor in the Goga Cho Building, 4916-47th Street, Yellowknife, NT.

Check in at Reception and ask for Kent Rose.

Q: When does the application procedure begin?

A: The OMTTP runs every two years, with the Program commencing in the fall. Generally, applications will be accepted in the spring of the year with an expectation that the students will be selected in June. Specific dates will be posted on the website and other media.

Q: How long is the accreditation valid?

A: The OMTTP was awarded a six year accreditation (expires July 2021) by the International Council of Accreditation (ICA).

Q: What would happen if accreditation of the OMTTP was not renewed?

A: The ophthalmic technology profession is an unregulated profession which means certification is not required in order to work in the field. In the event the ICA withholds accreditation, graduating students would still be able to work in the field but would not be able to become certified immediately. There would be a delay of a few years before being eligible to write the certification exams.

The OMTTP and Stanton Territorial Health Authority are committed to being accredited.

Q: Why is certification of ophthalmic medical personnel important?

Because the ophthalmic technology is an unregulated profession certification is not required in order to work. However, clinics and offices are beginning to require certification for employment. Certification shows that you have attained a predetermined level of knowledge and proficiency in the field of ophthalmic technology and some clinics and offices actually pay certified personnel more than non-certified personnel.

Q: What is the difference between an ophthalmic assistant, an ophthalmic technician, and an ophthalmic medical technologist?

A: All three of the above are considered ophthalmic medical personnel. The difference is in their knowledge and skills. The certifying body for the profession (Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel in Ophthalmology (www.jcahpo.org)) differentiates the three as follows:

- Ophthalmic Assistant - entry-level
- Ophthalmic Technician - intermediate
- Ophthalmic Medical Technologist - advanced

The OMTTP is training at the highest of these levels: ophthalmic medical technologist level.

Q: What salary can I expect after graduation?

Salaries for ophthalmic technologists are highly variable depending upon where the technologist is working. Ophthalmic technologists often work in ophthalmologists' private offices and hospital-based clinics. Hospital clinics usually tend to have higher salaries and more benefits.

As of April 1, 2015 the pay scale for ophthalmic technologists with the Government of the Northwest Territories, as per the 2015 UNW Collective Agreement, is from \$44.75-\$53.44

Q: Am I able to have a tour of the training center?

A: Absolutely! Contact the Clinical Instructor/ Program Director via email to arrange for a tour. Kent_Rose@gov.nt.ca.

Q: Is the Ophthalmic Medical Technologist Training Program accredited?

A: Yes. The OMTTP is accredited by the International Council of Accreditation.

Q: What are the implications of the accreditation?

A: Graduating students of the OMTTP may be eligible to write the certification exams offered by the Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel in Ophthalmology (JCAHPO).

Q: What organization certifies ophthalmic medical personnel?

A: Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel and Ophthalmology (JCAHPO). JCAHPO is based in St. Paul, Minneapolis and is the certifying body for the United States, Canada and many other countries.

Visit: <http://www.jcahpo.org>

Q: Will I be eligible to apply for student loans while taking the program?

A: Yes, students in the OMTTP may be eligible to apply for GNWT Student Financial Assistance.

Q: Is there financial support available while in the OMTTP?

A: There is no financial support. Students are not paid during their training.

Q: What are the job prospects for graduating students?

A: The job outlook is favorable for graduating ophthalmic technologists. The demand for ophthalmic professionals will continue to increase and career opportunities will expand because of the growing elderly population nationwide.

Graduating from the program, however, does not guarantee you a job. Since 1993, 28/31 (90%) of our graduates have obtained employment in the ophthalmic field.

Q: Do you accept out of province students?

A: Yes, although the OMTTP follows the same Affirmative Action policy as the Government of the Northwest Territories. For more information on this, please visit: <http://www.hr.gov.nt.ca/policy/documents/AffirmativeActionPolicy.pdf>

Q: Who do I contact for more questions?

A: Please email the Clinical Instructor, Program Director of the OMTTP, Kent Rose: Kent_Rose@gov.nt.ca

Q: Where can I find out more about this profession?

A: The following websites are useful resources:

- <http://eyesite.ca/english/csomp/>
- <http://www.jcahpo.org/newsite/index.htm>
- <http://www.atpo.org/>