RADIATION THERAPY

Radiation therapy is a field in which the radiation therapist prepares and treats already diagnosed cancer patients with high energy radiation using highly specialized equipment. A radiation therapist helps plan and administer prescribed doses of radiation to affected areas as directed by a radiation oncologist.

A radiation therapist is a health care professional skilled in the art and science of medical radiation treatment. Therapists are primarily concerned with the design and administration of radiation therapy treatment, in addition to issues of daily well-being for patients with cancer. A therapist is responsible for administering the prescribed treatment dose of radiation using high-energy linear accelerators. These treatments are provided to cure the patient or to control the disease, thereby improving the patient's quality of life. Therapists also monitor patient's reactions for radiation side effects, and keep highly accurate records of planning, treatment and equipment use.

This profession combines the great satisfaction of helping others during a difficult time in their life with high technology equipment and sophisticated scientific techniques. Radiation therapists work as part of a multi-disciplinary health care team with radiation oncologists, medical physicists, dosimetrists, nurses and other medical specialists to provide the best treatment and support available to their patients.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

- Minimum cumulative GPA is 2.7/4.0 scale.
- Minimum ACT scores are 22 composite, with no subsection lower than a 20. Equivalent SAT scores are acceptable

Professional coursework in the radiation therapy program is concentrated in the fourth year of the curriculum. Students may enter as a freshman or as a transfer, depending on availability. Once admitted to the program, students must maintain a cumulative grade point average of 2.70 to remain in good standing.

WHY CHOOSE SLU

- Opportunities to participate in professional conferences with SLU faculty and fellow students
- Interprofessional focus of core curriculum to build a team approach to health care
- Instruction by professionally credentialed faculty
- Undergraduate opportunities to conduct research and produce projects/papers acceptable for publication and presentation at professional conferences
- Flexible curriculum that allows diverse areas of concentration
- Pre-Med and Pre-Physician Assistant curriculum options
- Radiation therapists are required to graduate from an accredited program and pass a certification examination from a national certifying agency
- Students train at multiple clinical sites in St. Louis metro area

STUDENT ACTIVITY

Radiation therapy students are encouraged to join and participate in the functions of the American Society of Radiologic Technologists, in addition to local professional organizations.
CAREER OPPORTUNITIES
There are many opportunities for radiation therapists in various locations. Graduates can work as radiation therapists in hospitals and clinics. They also may seek positions in treatment planning, information technology, health care administration, equipment sales and training, teaching, and other related fields. Some graduates further their education to pursue careers in dosimetry, medical physics and education. Radiation therapy provides an excellent pre-med curriculum. Many students attend graduate school part-time with assistance from their place of employment.

Some jobs are classified as traveling jobs where the employee provides temporary help to departments that are short-staffed for a short period of time. These therapists travel regularly, with length of stay and location varying.

Career advancement opportunities from the position of staff technologist may lead to areas of administration, education, sales or research.

JOB RESPONSIBILITIES
Major focus areas are for radiation therapists:
- Primary care of patients
- Delivery of treatments using linear accelerators or similar equipment
- Treatment planning

EARNINGS POTENTIAL
The general salary range depends on geographic location, years of experience, and education. The median annual wage for radiation therapists is $72,910, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS
Membership in professional organizations offer the radiation therapist the opportunity to attend conferences, workshops and classes in all areas of radiation therapy.

For more information on the American Society of Radiologic Technologists, please visit asrt.org

ACCREDITATION
The Saint Louis University Radiation Therapy Program is accredited by the Joint Review Committee on Education in Radiologic Technology
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RADIATION THERAPY
TWO PLUS TWO OPTION FOR STUDENTS WITH AN ASSOCIATE DEGREE IN RADIOGRAPHY

Saint Louis University offers a two-plus-two opportunity that is designed to assist students from community colleges in choosing courses that will fulfill the core requirement for a bachelor's degree in radiation therapy.

ASSOCIATE OF APPLIED SCIENCE IN RADIOGRAPHY

For those students who currently have, or are working towards an AAS degree, Saint Louis University allows for a maximum of 64 credit hours to include a 28 credit hour block for AAS Radiography Program Professional Portion and 36 credit hours that are general earned at the community college can be applied towards the bachelor's degree in radiation therapy.

Selection of student for admission is on a space available basis, and final acceptance decision is made by the Radiation Therapy Program Director.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Minimum admission criteria include:
• AAS degree in Radiography awarded
• Minimum cumulative GPA of 2.7 on a 4.0 scale
• Successful completion of the ARRT registry exam in Radiography and meets the Radiation Therapy Program's technical standards

WHAT IS RADIATION THERAPY?

Radiation therapy is the use of high energy x-rays, gamma rays or fast particles such as electrons for the treatment of malignant disease. Radiation therapy treatment procedures are provided to cure the patient, or to relieve the painful symptoms of the disease. Radiation treatment offers control of the disease, improving patients' quality of life. Radiation therapy, in combination with surgery and chemotherapy, gives cancer patients the best chance of success in overcoming their disease.

WHAT IS A RADIATION THERAPIST?

Therapists are primarily concerned with the design and administration of radiation therapy treatment, and issues of daily well-being, for patients with cancer. A radiation therapist is responsible for the daily delivery of the prescribed treatment dose according to a treatment plan prepared by the physician, in consultation with the medical physicist and dosimetrist.

Responsibilities include:
• Primary care of patients
• Treatment planning
• Treatment set up: simulation
• Delivery of treatments using linear accelerators or similar equipment.

EARNINGS POTENTIAL

The median annual wage for radiation therapists is $72,910, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Jobs can be found in the following settings:
• Radiation treatment facilities located in hospitals
• Freestanding clinics
• Treatment centers
• Cancer centers
• Industry
• Sales

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Membership in professional organizations offer the nuclear medicine technologist the opportunity to attend conferences, workshops and classes in all areas of radiation therapy.

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