

NEW ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA for the CTR EXAM

Implementation: Starting with the 2008 CTR Exams

Rationale for Changes

As cancer registrars move forward, it is apparent that obtaining college level education is becoming more critical as oncology physicians and researchers are becoming more sophisticated and complex in their approach to cancer care. Cancer registrars must know the natural disease process of cancer, all available treatment options (standard of care and research), and general prognostic indicators. To be successful in this profession, one must obtain a strong background in anatomy and physiology, medical terminology, medical record management, confidentiality rules and regulations, speech, computer applications and database management skills, statistics and business management.

In 2005, NCRA contracted to have a 15-month study conducted by the University of California, San Francisco, Center for Health Professions and School of Nursing. The primary goal was to develop a baseline understanding of the current workforce in the cancer registry field. Study methods included focus groups, key informant interviews, and an online survey. Information was tabulated from 615 participants.

The final report of this study is titled *Frontline Workers in Cancer Data Management: Workforce Analysis Study of the Cancer Registry Field*.

In the Executive Summary, the very first recommendation from this report is that NCRA should consider implementing a minimum Associate's Degree requirement for entry into the field. From the report, of those participants currently working in the profession, 55% agree that an Associate's Degree would best prepare students for working as a cancer registrar. They also felt that the lack of a degree requirement impacts both public awareness and the ability to recruit to the profession.

Nearly all participants agreed that there was nearly uniform agreement by participants that a minimum college degree should be a prerequisite to certification testing. They believe that a requirement of a minimum degree would improve the profession by increasing the public profile of cancer registration, improve the credibility of the job as a profession, and improve the quality of cancer data.

Salary information from this study also showed that salary increases with the level of education with a \$2,000 a year increase for Associate's Degree compared to high school and \$4,800 for a Bachelor's Degree compared to high school.

Based on this information and other feedback from the profession, the Council on Certification has spent the last two years reviewing all of the current eligibility criteria. In addition to the changes that have already been posted in the approved allied health fields to both Route 3 and Route 4, and the addition of Route 5 for advanced degrees, the Council is announcing the following schedule of modifications to the eligibility in the upcoming years.

The focus of the changes will be to require a minimum of an Associate's degree in an allied health field by 2010. Based on information from candidates taking the CTR exam in the past 7 years, 40% do not currently have a minimum of an Associate's degree. It is unknown how much additional training would be needed by those candidates indicating that they have "some college".

Current Eligibility Routes can be found at: <http://www.ctrexam.org/eligibility/index.htm>

Phase In of New Eligibility Routes

In 2008:

NEW Eligibility Route 1:

Minimum two years full-time (24 months or 3,900 hours) or equivalent experience in the Cancer Registry field and two semesters/3 quarters of **college-level courses*** in Human Anatomy and/or Physiology.

Identified change: The additional educational requirement of two semesters of college-level courses* in Human Anatomy and/or Physiology.

* = Coursework must be completed (not audited) with a passing grade; and
“college-level course” is determined as coursework eligible for college credit.

In 2009:

NEW Eligibility Route 1:

Minimum two years full-time (24 months or 3,900 hours) or equivalent experience in the Cancer Registry field and the equivalent of one year (12 credits hours) of college education that includes two semesters/3 quarters of Human Anatomy and/or Physiology, one semester of Medical Science/Biology[^] plus a **college-level course*** in Medical Terminology.

Identified change: The educational requirement of the equivalent of one year (12 credits hours) of college education that, in addition to the required Anatomy and/or Physiology requirements, includes the additional courses of one semester of Medical Science/Biology[^] plus a college-level course* in Medical Terminology.

[^] = Any Biology course (human, plant, general, intro, etc.) will satisfy this course requirement.

* = Coursework must be completed (not audited) with a passing grade; and
“college-level course” is determined as coursework eligible for college credit.

NEW Eligibility Route 2:

Successful completion of an NCRA-approved Cancer Information Management Associate’s degree; **OR** successful completion of an NCRA-Accredited Formal Education Program **AND** successful completion of a minimum of an Associate’s degree or equivalent (4 semesters/6 quarters).

Identified change: The educational requirement of a minimum of an Associate’s degree or equivalent (4 semesters/6 quarters).

In 2010:

Eligibility Route 1 will be eliminated, meaning that all candidates must apply through another route and that they have a minimum of an Associate’s degree in an allied health field.

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Council on Certification