



# Focus on Your Future: A Career in Medical Photography

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The idea of Medical Photography conjures up a variety of mental images. Is it the photograph of a surgeon in the operating room? Is it the series of images of the birth of a child? Is it the harsh reality of images from an autopsy? Or is it the stained tissue of cancer cells seen through a microscope? If you answered yes to any of these questions, congratulations...you're partially right.

Medical photography, or perhaps more accurately medical-related photography has evolved over the years. Beginning as documentation of medical conditions, this generally consisted of photographs of patients, surgical procedures and anatomical dissections. This also included the recording of patients on movie film (yes there was life before digital video), gross specimen photography and the copying of x-ray films.

Today, medical photography continues to play a key role in the diagnosis, treatment and research surrounding numerous medical conditions which can include the areas of dermatology, plastic surgery, oncology and orthopedics. It could be a one-person department and include public relations work as well or very specialized training in ophthalmological photography in a larger organization. Your work may also include computer graphics, presentation design and environmental portraits. Chances are though, that you will not be spending much time in a darkroom. You may see your final work on a website, a poster presentation or a national publication.



Many images taken by medical photographers find their way into medical books, journals and are used to further the education of medical professionals.



A thorough knowledge and understanding of the technical aspects of photography is essential. The need goes beyond simply having a "strong interest" in photography and needs to be augmented with both professional (earning a salary) and academic experience. Internships can also provide invaluable information and insight as well. There are numerous photography programs offered across the country, but only a limited number that offer degrees in biomedical photography. A good source of information would be at <http://bca.org/>, the web home of the BioCommunications Association. The BCA is an international association of media professionals who create and use quality images in visual communications for teaching, documentation and presentations in the life sciences and medicine.

Read. Experiment. Ask questions. Be curious. While as a photographer you may spend much of your time with one eye closed, keep both eyes open to the world around you. As you continue to learn, you will be better prepared to visually convey to others what you see.

Medical Photographers work side by side with surgeons to document findings to be used for education, patient care and in some instances, legal purposes.