

Cancer registrars ensure that timely, accurate, and complete data are maintained on all types of cancer diagnosed and/or treated within a health care institution or within a defined population. These data are then used to inform a wide variety of public health decisions and provide rich information for cancer diagnosis, treatment and prevention programs.

What is a cancer registry?

A cancer registry is a clinical information system designed for the collection, management, and analysis of data on persons with the diagnosis of a malignant or neoplastic disease (cancer). Cancer registries can be classified into three general types:

- Health care institution registries maintain data on all patients diagnosed and/or treated for cancer at their facility. Health care facilities report cancer cases to the central or state cancer registry as required by law.
- Central registries are population-based registries that maintain data on all cancer patients within certain geographical areas.
- Special purpose registries maintain data on particular types of cancer, such as brain tumors.

Why maintain a cancer registry?

Maintaining a cancer registry ensures that health officials have accurate and timely information, while ensuring the availability of data for treatment, research, and educational purposes:

- Local, state, and national cancer agencies use registry data in defined areas to make important public health decisions that maximize the effectiveness of limited public health funds, such as the placement of screening programs.
- Cancer registries are valuable research tools for those interested in the etiology, diagnosis, and treatment of cancer.
- Fundamental research on the epidemiology of cancer is initiated using the accumulated data.
- Lifetime follow-up is an important aspect of the cancer registry. Current patient follow-up serves as a reminder to physicians and patients to schedule regular clinical examinations and provides accurate survival information.

What information is maintained in the cancer registry and how is it used?

Cancer registries maintain a wide range of demographic and medical information, such as:

- Demographic information includes age, gender, race/ethnicity, birthplace, and residence.
- Medical history includes physical findings, screening information, occupation, and any history of a previous cancer.
- Diagnostic findings include types, dates, and results of procedures used to diagnose cancer.
- Cancer information, including primary site, cell type, and extent of disease.
- Cancer therapy, including surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, hormone, or immunotherapy.
- Follow-up, including annual information about treatment, recurrence, and patient status.

National Cancer Registrars Association

Chartered in 1974, the National Cancer Registrars Association (NCRA) is a non-profit organization that represents more than 5,500 cancer registry professionals and Certified Tumor Registrars (CTR). Its mission is to serve as the premier education, credentialing, and advocacy resource for cancer data professionals. Learn more at www.ncra-usa.org.

Public health and medical providers utilize these data in a wide variety of ways. Specifically, they are used to:

- Evaluate patient outcome, quality of life, and satisfaction issues and implement procedures for improvement.
- Provide follow-up information for cancer surveillance.
- Calculate survival rates by utilizing various data items and factors.
- Provide information for cancer program activities.
- Analyze referral patterns.
- Allocate resources at the health care facility, the community, region or state level.
- Develop educational programs for health care providers, patients and the general public.
- Report cancer incidence as required under state law.
- Evaluate efficacy of treatment modalities.

What is a cancer registrar?

Cancer registrars are data management experts who report cancer statistics for various healthcare agencies. Registrars work closely with physicians, administrators, researchers, and health care planners to provide support for cancer program development, ensure compliance of reporting standards, and serve as a valuable resource for cancer information with the ultimate goal of preventing and controlling cancer.

How does one become a cancer registrar?

Traditionally, cancer registrars were trained on the job. Today, formal education programs at colleges around the country teach cancer data management. Curricula include cancer and its management, medical terminology, anatomy and physiology, biostatistics and epidemiology, cancer data abstracting, database record management, cancer program management, cancer registry procedures, among others.

What is the Certified Tumor Registrar (CTR®) credential?

The Certified Tumor Registrar credential demonstrates a requisite knowledge and professional competence needed within the cancer registry. It is nationally recognized in the recruitment and retention of registry personnel. NCRA's certification board—the Council on Certification—develops and administers the CTR exam. Over 5,000 individuals have attained the CTR credential. Hospitals accredited by the Commission on Cancer require all case abstracting be performed by a CTR.

Cancer Registry Timeline

- 1926: First hospital registry at Yale-New Haven Hospital in New Haven, CT.
- 1935: First central cancer registry established in Connecticut.
- 1956: American College of Surgeons requires a cancer registry for approved cancer programs.
- 1971: National Cancer Act budgets monies to the National Cancer Institute for research, detection and treatment of cancer.
- 1973: Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results (SEER) Program of NCI establishes the first national Cancer Registry.
- 1983: NCRA's Council of Certification establishes the Certified Tumor Registrar (CTR®) credential.
- 1992: Congress establishes a National Program of Cancer Registries (Public Law 102-515).
- 1993: State laws make cancer a reportable disease.

How does one earn the CTR credential?

The first step is to determine eligibility. Requirements include education and experience in the cancer registry field.

Eligibility Routes

Route A – Path 1

Education: Successful completion of an Associate’s degree in Cancer Registry Management (CRM) or Cancer Information Management (CIM) from an NCRA-accredited Program.

Experience: Successful completion of a 160-hour clinical practicum under the supervision of a CTR.

Route A – Path 2

Education: Successful completion of a minimum of an Associate’s degree in any field or the equivalent (60 college-level credits) AND a certificate in Cancer Registry Management (CRM) or Cancer Information Management (CIM) from an NCRA-accredited Program.

Experience: Successful completion of a 160-hour clinical practicum under the supervision of a CTR.

Route B

Education: Successful completion of a minimum of an Associate’s degree in any field or the equivalent (60 college-level credits), including two semesters of Human Anatomy and Human Physiology. (Grade of C or better is required.)

Experience: 1,950 hours (equal to one year full-time) experience in the cancer registry field.

(See attached CTR Exam Eligibility Chart for details.)

Once eligibility requirements are met, candidates can take the exam during any of the three, three-week long testing periods. Applications must be submitted by the

deadline noted for the desired exam date. Test questions are prepared by persons in the cancer registry profession from diverse backgrounds and job descriptions. The CTR Exam is composed of 180, multiple-choice questions, based on seven Domains of Practice:

- Casefinding (six closed book; 12 open book)
- Abstracting/Coding (20 closed book; 43 open book)
 - » Patient Identification
 - » Cancer Identification
 - » Staging
 - » Treatment
 - » Case Validation and Finalization
- Follow-up (13 closed book; five open book)
- Data Quality Assurance (27 closed book)
- Analysis and Data Usage (18 closed book)
- Registry Organization and Operations (18 closed book)
- Cancer Program Accreditations (18 closed book)

One hundred and twenty (120) questions comprise the closed-book portion of the exam; sixty (60) questions comprise the open-book portion which focuses on coding and abstracting. Candidates are allowed four (4) hours to complete the two-part exam. The exam is delivered via computer-based testing centers on behalf of the Council on Certification. There are over 300 testing locations throughout the U.S. and worldwide.

Candidates receiving a passing score will be entitled to use “CTR” after their name and will receive a personalized certificate from the Council on Certification. To maintain a certified status, a CTR credentialed professional must complete 20 hours of continuing education credits every two years, plus pay an annual fee.

CTR Exam Questions

CTR Exam Web site: www.ctrexam.org

E-mail: ctrexam@ncra-usa.org

Telephone: 703-299-6640 Ext. 312

Need your individual eligibility to be reviewed?

Access the *CTR Exam Eligibility Request Form* at www.ctrexam.org/eligibility. Complete the form in its entirety and submit as noted on the form. Please allow 6-8 weeks to process.

How does one get started?

Whether you are beginning your career or are a seasoned professional seeking a new challenge, NCRA is here to help. NCRA provides training and educational opportunities to assist you in crafting a successful career in cancer registry management and to earn and maintain the CTR credential. NCRA's formal education programs, including associate degree and certificate programs, produce students who successfully complete the training have fulfilled the eligibility requirements to take the CTR Exam. All accredited programs have undergone extensive review by NCRA and many are available online, offering distance learning options. For more information on NCRA's accredited programs, go to <http://www.ncra-usa.org/Education/Accredited-Education-Programs>.

How does one prepare to take the CTR Exam?

NCRA offers a host of tools to prepare candidates to take the CTR Exam, including a live online CTR Exam prep workshop; archived CTR Exam prep webinars; an intensive one-day, in-person CTR Exam prep training at the annual conference; a CTR Exam online practice test; and the NCRA *Study Guide for the CTR Exam*. Go to the "CTR Prep" tab of the Center for Cancer Registry Education (www.CancerRegistryEducation.org/CTR-Prep) for more details and to access these products.

How does one maintain the CTR credential?

A credentialed professional must complete 20 hours of continuing education (CE) credits every two years to maintain the CTR credential. NCRA's Center for Cancer Registry Education is a Learning Management System designed to provide easy access to high-quality educational programming. The Web site offers a variety of education products and services that will allow registrars to tailor their training and manage CE credits. Go to the "CE Opportunities" tab of the Center for Cancer Registry Education (www.CancerRegistryEducation.org/CE-Opportunities) for more details.

Questions About How to Become a Cancer Registrar?

Contact:

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Call: 703-299-6640 Ext. 314

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Council on Certification

CERTIFIED TUMOR REGISTRAR (CTR®) EXAM ELIGIBILITY ROUTES

EDUCATION

EXPERIENCE

ROUTE A - PATH 1

Successful completion of an **Associate's Degree** in Cancer Registry Management (CRM) or Cancer Information Management (CIM) from an NCRA-accredited Program.

Clinical Practicum

Successful completion of a 160-hour clinical practicum in a CTR-staffed cancer registry.

<http://www.ncra-usa.org/160>

All CRM/CIM coursework must be completed before beginning the Clinical Practicum.

ROUTE A - PATH 2

Successful completion of a minimum of any Associate's degree **in any field** or the equivalent (60 college-level credits).

Successful completion of a **Certificate** in CRM or CIM from an NCRA-accredited Program.

Clinical Practicum

Successful completion of a 160-hour clinical practicum in a CTR-staffed cancer registry.

<http://www.ncra-usa.org/160>

All CRM/CIM coursework must be completed before beginning the Clinical Practicum.

ROUTE B

Successful completion of a minimum of any Associate's degree **in any field** or the equivalent (60 college-level credits)

Two semesters of Human Anatomy and Human Physiology. (<http://www.ncra-usa.org/AP>)

Cancer Registry Work Experience

1,950 hours (equal to one year full-time) in the cancer registry field.

NEED MORE DETAILS ON THE CTR CREDENTIAL?

Web site: www.ctrexam.org · E-mail: ctrexam@ncra-usa.org · Phone: 703-299-6640 Ext. 312

CTR EXAM ELIGIBILITY QUESTIONS?

Visit: www.ctrexam.org/eligibility

Need your individual eligibility to be reviewed? Access the CTR Exam Eligibility Request Form at www.ctrexam.org/eligibility.

Complete the form in its entirety and submit as noted on the form.