

Someday I'd like to be a...

Nuclear Medicine Technologist

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Meet Kelly Evans

Nuclear Medicine Technologist
WakeMed Health & Hospitals

"This is a challenging field because it requires many different skills. You must be caring to work with patients, technical to work with imaging machines and computers, and scientific to handle and understand radioactive materials."

WHAT A NUCLEAR MEDICINE TECHNOLOGIST DOES

I study the function and structure of organs, such as the heart, lungs and gallbladder. To do this, I inject a radioactive liquid into the patient's body and then perform various tests such as lung scans, bone scans, cardiac stress tests and gallbladder tests. We look for things like cancer, blockages, blood clots and bleeding, and can determine if the organs are functioning properly. For example, during a gallbladder test, the gamma camera used for the scans will take 60 one-minute photos of both the gallbladder filling and emptying the radioactive liquid. The photos are turned into a "movie" that we review to ensure the gallbladder is working properly.

Since I work with radioactive materials, I wear a radiation detection badge and ring to monitor the levels of radiation I am exposed to. It is important to always handle radioactive materials carefully to minimize exposure level, and prevent any negative health risks.

WHY I CHOSE THIS CAREER

It is a great mix of technical work and patient care. I thought it would make me happy and feel challenged for a long time.

TYPICAL WORK DAY

First thing in the morning, I complete quality control checks on the instruments, the gamma camera and the radioactive materials. I then prepare the patient for the scans by starting an IV filled with radioactive liquid. Once the patient is ready, I start scanning with the camera. This can take anywhere from one to four hours.

THE MOST REWARDING PART OF MY JOB

Patient care is the best part of my job. No one is in the hospital because they want to be. I focus on making the patient's experience as good as it can be while they are in my care.

EDUCATION BACKGROUND/PRIOR EXPERIENCE

I started as a unit clerk and then was a nursing assistant in labor and delivery. I had planned to go to nursing school but decided to become an X-ray tech focused on nuclear medicine. To become a nuclear medicine technologist, you can get an associate's degree or a bachelor's degree, certification in nuclear medicine technology and become licensed by the Nuclear Medicine Technology Certification Board (NMTCB) or the American Registry of Radiological Technologists (ARRT).

SCHOOL SUBJECTS TO FOCUS ON

This job requires a lot of different skills, especially since I deal with radioactive materials. I suggest taking anatomy/physiology, biology, chemistry and physics.

