



Polysomnographic (PSG) Technology is an allied health specialty for the diagnosis and treatment of disorders of sleep and daytime alertness. Polysomnographic Technologists (sometimes called "sleep techs" for short) work as members of this health care team to help diagnose and treat sleep disorders.

Due to growing awareness of sleep disorders and the dramatic affects they have on everyday life, the need for sleep techs is on the rise. This specialty field offers a valuable opportunity for allied health professionals looking to work in another medical arena AND for those in other professions who would like a challenging and rewarding new career. Because the field of sleep medicine technology is relatively new, job opportunities are plentiful in both clinical and research, and salaries are relatively higher than in other comparable associated health fields.

Many of us know how a bad night's sleep will affect us the next day. Imagine feeling that way every day, for years! Thousands of Americans suffer the effects of sleep disorders every night and day. Some have difficulty sleeping when they want to, others have difficulty staying awake and focused when they need to.

There are dozens of recognized sleep disorders. Some can be diagnosed with a visit to a doctor who is a Board Certified Sleep Specialist. In some cases, a recording of the patient's sleep is needed to diagnose and treat the sleep disorder. The sleep recording is usually done in a sleep lab and performed by the polysomnographic technologist (sleep tech). The sleep lab may be located in a hospital, office building or even a hotel.

When a patient is referred to the sleep lab for testing, the Polysomnographic Technologist greets the patient, shows them the bedroom where they will be recorded and attaches sensors to the patient's skin surface. The sensors are glued or taped to the patient's scalp, face, legs and body.

After the sensors are applied, the patient settles in bed and the recording begins. While the patient sleeps, the technologist is busy watching both the video monitor of the patient and the recorded brainwaves, eye movements, muscle and breathing activity of the patient. They make careful notations to assist in the interpretation of the recording.

In the morning, the technologist ends the recording and removes the sensors from the patient. The entire recording is then reviewed and analyzed for the length and quality of sleep and for the presence of abnormal breathing or movements that have affected the sleep quality. A report is generated, reviewed for accuracy and given to the doctor who will diagnose the sleep disorder.

PSG techs often have experience in performing medical procedures or providing medical care. Many have worked previously as EEG or Neurodiagnostic Technologists, Respiratory Therapists, Cardiac technicians or EMTs. Some have no previous medical experience and require additional school or training time.

Since the field is relatively new and rapidly growing, training is varied and may be "on-the-job training", and/or attending some level of formal training program. Training programs may last days, weeks or years. The amount, type of previous experience, and/or formal training required will vary. There are three levels of sleep techs:

1. **Polysomnographic Technician Trainee**, who usually require direct supervision while



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2. **Polysomnographic Technician**, who may work nights to record the sleep study and perform titrations, or work days to analyze the recordings and prepare a report.
3. **Registered Polysomnographic Technologist,(RPSGT)** who has the required experience and knowledge to pass a difficult national exam. RPSGTs typically work days and may have supervisory duties. The Professional Association

The need for polysomnographic technicians/technologists is expected to continue to grow in the coming years due to the increasing awareness of the ability to diagnose and treat sleep disorders and the risk posed by a sleep disorder that is undiagnosed and untreated.

Call your local hospital or sleep center and determine for yourself the need for polysomnographic technologists in your area. Nationally, the job market for sleep techs is excellent but regional needs may vary. Find out the training expectations and experience level required in your area. Do technologists need to be registered? Does the hospital subsidize a training program? Do they provide their own on-the-job training? What pay scale do sleep techs fall under?

For information on requirements to become a Registered Polysomnographic Technologist (RPSGT), you should visit the web site for the **Board of Registered Polysomnographic Technologists (BRPT)** --- www.brpt.org

Also talk to individuals who work in the sleep medicine field. What are their reactions? How do you feel about working nights? Most sleep jobs - particularly for newcomers - will take place at night. Does your personal situation enable you to get quality sleep during daytime hours?

Read, read and read some more! Start on the AAST web site - www.aastweb.org. This is the professional society for sleep technicians. Visit the site for the American Academy of Sleep Medicine: www.aasmnet.org.

The National Sleep Foundation www.sleepfoundation.org, is responsible for bringing sleep issues to public attention and should not be missed. Be sure to visit