

WHAT IS A PERFUSIONIST?

The perfusionist is part of the medical team supporting major surgery. In any operation where it is necessary to bypass the heart and lungs, this specialist is responsible for ensuring the correct perfusion of oxygen into the blood. Using sophisticated extracorporeal circulation equipment, the perfusionist monitors the patient's blood and uses various techniques to keep the patient stable. In consultation with the surgeon, he may give blood, introduce various drugs and anaesthetics, and warm or cool the patient.

ROLES OF A PERFUSIONIST

A Perfusionist can be involved in a number of cardiac surgical procedures:

- Select vascular procedures and a few other surgical procedures.
- Support the physiological and metabolic needs of the cardiac surgical patient so that the cardiac surgeon may operate on a still, unbeating heart.
- Circulatory and respiratory functions of the heart-lung machine.
- Antilogous blood collection and processing.
- Implementation and management of the intra-aortic balloon pump.
- During an operation, the perfusionist is required to monitor a patient's condition.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

A Perfusionist can work in several different environments, but they are usually employed by hospitals. Individual surgeons and companies that supply facilities with perfusion services employ them in various roles. They may also work in research and development or in marketing or sales.

QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED

The Perfusionist is a highly trained member of the cardiothoracic surgical team which consists of cardiac surgeons, anaesthesiologists, physician assistants, surgical technicians and nurses.

SUPERVISION PROVIDED

A comprehensive orientation program is provided for all new staff members with ongoing support.

PERSONAL SKILL REQUIRED OF A PERFUSIONIST

- Should have the ability to concentrate for long periods of time.
- Have excellent communication skills.
- Have a strong sense of responsibility.
- Be able to take and carry out orders.
- Able to work well under extreme pressure.

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