



Radiation Therapy

COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND HEALTH

Undergraduate Programs

Major:

- Radiation Therapy

Why Study Radiation Therapy at UWL?

UWL, in cooperation with its clinical affiliate sites, currently provides the only bachelor's degree program in radiation therapy in the state of Wisconsin. There are currently about twenty-six other bachelor's degree programs in the United States. The radiation therapy curriculum at UWL benefits from excellent campus courses in science and humanities, as well as a specifically designed professional program. An important part of the program is the courses and clinical rotations students experience at clinical internship sites during their final year of training. These sites offer students an opportunity to learn and apply skills and concepts in a very effective manner. They work directly with skilled professionals and real patients at institutions that are well known for their excellence in radiation oncology. The program seeks to foster in its students' professional development, problem solving, and leadership skills needed for current and future health care environments. In order to assure a high quality education in radiation therapy, UWL maintains programmatic accreditation from the Joint Review Committee of Education in Radiologic Technology (JRCERT), 20 N. Wacker Dr. #2850, Chicago, IL 60606-3182, telephone 312.704.5300.

Department Overview

A radiation therapist is a healthcare professional skilled in the art and science of medical radiation treatment delivery. This profession combines the great satisfaction of helping people during a difficult time in their life with use of high technology equipment and sophisticated scientific techniques. Major focus areas are the primary care of patients, simulations, treatment planning and delivery of treatments using linear accelerators or radioisotopes.

The majority of patients receiving radiation therapy have cancer. Along with surgery and chemotherapy, radiation therapy offers these patients the best chance for success in overcoming their disease. While not all patients are curable, radiation also offers control of disease and relief of symptoms, improving patients' quality of life. Radiation therapists find that working with cancer patients, although sad at times, is more often uplifting than depressing. They have the opportunity to get to know people whose strength and courage shine through their difficulties. Because radiation therapists see patients on a daily basis, they are able to develop relationships with them that are unique and satisfying. Radiation therapy professionals, including therapists, physicians, nurses, social workers, and physicists, work very closely as a team on their patients' behalf. The camaraderie and teamwork among the radiation therapy specialists add to the challenge and satisfaction of the profession.

The same characteristic that makes ionizing radiation valuable in killing cancer cells can be a safety concern for radiation workers. Because of this, radiation workers wear dosimeters to measure exposure. Radiation therapists, however, rarely receive measurable doses of radiation.

Job opportunities exist in hospitals and freestanding radiation therapy facilities. Radiation therapists enjoy relatively stable work hours and good salaries. Therapists may specialize in areas such as dosimetry, management, education, sales, and quality assurance. This field should be considered by anyone desiring a challenging career in allied health, with the reward of working with wonderful people.

Radiation Therapy Program
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Program Features

Radiation therapy is designed to be a four-year undergraduate program. In the first two years, students take courses that will meet general education requirements and prepare them for the professional courses to come. Examples of required coursework in the freshman and sophomore years include chemistry, physics, biology, anatomy and physiology, psychology or sociology, college algebra and trigonometry.

Students apply to the radiation therapy program usually in the first semester of sophomore year. The number of clinical internships available determines the number of students accepted. Forty hours of observation in a radiation therapy department are required as part of the application process. Students must also have a minimum 2.75 cumulative GPA and a grade of "C" or better in required courses.

Students provide references and interview with a selection committee. The committee carefully considers each applicant, looking at academic performance, personal characteristics and experiences that predict success in the field. Students accepted into the program must comply with the caregiver program background check according to the laws of Wisconsin and Illinois to assure that they will be able to work with patients at their internship sites.

Acceptance is for the junior year in which students take professional core courses on campus. Courses include genetics, radiation physics, pathophysiology, medical terminology, biology of cancer, radiobiology, patient care, medical imaging, health care systems and professional issues.

Students will then be assigned to a clinical internship site for their final year (13 months). Current sites are Froedtert Hospital in Milwaukee, Ascension-Columbia St. Mary's Hospital in Milwaukee, University of Wisconsin Hospital in Madison, Advocate Lutheran in Park Ridge, IL, Gunderson Health System in La Crosse, and Marshfield Clinic in Marshfield. Students will have occasional opportunities to broaden their educational experience with clinical rotations at recognized external affiliates. Upon graduation, students apply to take a national certification exam.

PROGRAM GOALS

The mission of the radiation therapy program at UWL is to educate and train radiation therapists who are knowledgeable, technically competent and dedicated to their profession and their patients, while meeting the educational personal needs of its students by emphasizing excellence in education and offering a broad based curriculum in liberal studies, professional courses and clinical internship.

PROGRAM PREREQUISITES

- The UWL general education program, with the exception of the writing emphasis requirement
- Two semesters of chemistry (CHM 103 & 104)
- One semester of physics for health majors or two semesters of general physics (PHY 125 or 103 & 104)
- Biology, anatomy and physiology (BIO 105, 312, & 313)
- One semester of psychology or sociology
- College algebra and trigonometry (MTH 151 Pre-calculus)
- Statistics (MTH 145)
- Forty hours of observation in a radiation therapy department
- Students must have a minimum of 2.75 cumulative GPA and a grade of "C" or better in required courses

CERTIFICATION

A national exam is offered by American Registry of Radiologic Technologists. Students may apply to take the certification exam after meeting all requirements for graduation. Applicants and students are advised that "Rules of Ethics" are established by the ARRT that are intended to promote the protection, safety and comfort of patients. Violation of these "Rules of Ethics" carries sanctions, such as not being allowed to sit for the exam or forfeiting certification.

Professional Associations

- RT Club has been established by radiation therapy students and those interested in the field on the UWL campus. The purpose of the club is to provide educational, social and service activities.
- Radiation Therapists of Wisconsin (RTOW) is the state wide professional organization. Students may become members and attend meetings at discounted rates. The organization also sponsors R-T Club activities and supports a student Paper Competition and a Student Achievement Award.
- American Society of Radiologic Technologists (ASRT), www.asrt.org, is the national organization representing radiation therapists. It provides a wide array of services and information, including a job-bank listing.
- Joint Review Committee on Education in Radiologic Technology, www.jrcert.org, is the programmatic accrediting body.
- American Registry of Radiologic Technologists, www.arrt.org, is the credentialing body.