The results of the Journal of Clinical Engineering’s 2004 Survey of Salaries and Responsibilities for Hospital Biomedical/Clinical Engineering and Technology Personnel indicate that the profession is thriving by nearly every measure: salaries are way up, more women are in the field, and younger people are being successfully recruited into the profession.

The most significant finding in this year’s survey is that salaries improved dramatically. For the second year in a row, the greatest pay increases were reported by the job category of biomedical equipment technician (BMET) Is, which saw an incredible 9.82% increase in salary from December 31, 2002, to December 31, 2003.

The Journal of Clinical Engineering conducted its 19th annual survey of the salaries paid to biomedical/clinical engineering (CE) and technology personnel in US hospitals. This paper (page 216) reports the salary and work responsibility data obtained from 366 professional in relationship to professional certification, region in the United States, teaching versus nonteaching facilities, years of experience, education, union membership, and gender. Data are included on wage increases and job responsibilities.

The job categories studied were:
- BMET I: a junior biomedical equipment technician
- BMET II: a biomedical equipment technician
- BMET III: a senior biomedical equipment technician who is not a supervisor
- BMET specialist: a BMET specializing in a particular area, such as radiology or the clinical laboratory
- BMET supervisor: a BMET with group or department supervisory responsibilities
- CE: clinical engineer who is not a supervisor
- CE supervisor: a clinical engineer who supervises a group or department
- Director/manager: the overall group or department director or manager.

Survey responses were received from March to August of 2004. Wage data were as of December 31, 2003, and December 31, 2002. Of the total 366 survey forms analyzed, they included 17 BMET Is, 76 BMET IIs, 87 BMET IIIs, 20 BMET specialists, 40 BMET supervisors, 12 clinical engineers, 12 CE supervisors, and 102 department directors/managers.

Pay by region of the county still varies tremendously. If all job titles are considered for all regions, the regions may be ranked from highest wages to lowest wages as Southeast, Mountain and Northeast tied for second place, Central, West Coast, Southwest, and East.

The effect of certification on wages continues to be of significance, and certification is obviously a valuable asset. For example, certified BMET specialist earned US$11,167 more than the national average, while noncertified BMET IIIs earned US$2688 less than the national average.

While education is an important indicator of success and increased salary, it is interesting to note that, within the most advanced job category in this study, department director/manager, about half of 102 survey respondents who checked this category have an associates degree, certificate, or no degree at all. The average
salary in this job category is nearly US$70,000 annually plus or minus a US$20,000 standard deviation.

This year’s survey revealed a record high percentage of female respondents: 6.78%. The average salary for women surpassed that for men in the following job categories: BMET II, BMET III, and CE supervisor.

Regarding job responsibilities, repairs, scheduled PM, and safety testing are still the main time drains on these job categories: BMET I, BMET II, BMET III, and BMET specialist, BMET supervisor, and clinical engineers. One clear trend is that BMET supervisors and clinical engineers are doing far more repairs and scheduled PM than ever before, while CE supervisors and department director/managers are handling more management duties.

The average survey respondent was 42.9 years old. Last year’s average was 44 years old, which upholds a positive trend of a survey population that is getting younger. This is a noticeable reversal of a population that was aging in the surveys from the mid-1990s until 2000—a time when many technicians were drawn to the Internet.

New to this year’s survey is a question asking respondents to breakdown the time they spend testing, repairing, and performing PM on the following device types: imaging equipment, therapeutic radiation equipment, beds, displays/monitors, telemetry devices, laboratory equipment, emergency room devices, nonelectrical devices, tracking systems, databases/software, personal computers, and other. Displays/monitors and imaging equipment are the top two device types on which all job categories spend their time.

Also new to this survey is a list of average salaries by hospital size, percentage of survey responders by hospital size, and nationwide averages for the age of responders versus total years experience and total years with their current employer.

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