

What is a Clinical Perfusionist

A perfusionist, also referred to as a clinical perfusionist, is a highly trained medical professional who primarily operates the heart-lung machine during cardiac surgery or procedures requiring cardiopulmonary support. The perfusionist is a member of the cardiac surgery team consisting of heart surgeons, anesthesiologists, and nurses. The perfusionist's main responsibility is to support the heart surgery patient so that the surgeon can operate on a still unbeating heart. Other responsibilities include autologous blood collection, processing and retransfusion, operation of the intraortic balloon pump and ventricular assist devices and point of care laboratory testing.

Perfusion training programs usually require a college degree with concentration in biology and chemistry and two years of professional training consisting of academic and clinical education specific to perfusion science.