



Texas Association for Clinical Laboratory Science

TACLS News

A Quiet Declaration of Self-Determination, Reflections on the 2003 ASCLS Annual Meeting

John Wentz, TACLS Past-President

A city rich in history before the borders of the Republic of Texas were found on any map, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was the site for the 2003 ASCLS Meeting. Those in attendance at the opening session were challenged to seize the moment, to recognize this current juncture for the health professions. To realize that this is a time in the history of our profession of clinical laboratory science when the practitioners set their own course. The one giving the challenge was not a famous doctor or scientist of renown, but an actor in the role of Thomas Jefferson. I for one enjoyed the change that was entertaining, yet substantive.

History tells us several famous Americans like Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Martin Luther King were complex men who dealt with complex issues. Jefferson was no single-minded ideologue, but a pragmatic, practical man who realized you cannot solve complex problems with simple, knee-jerk solutions. Similarly, our profession is complex and multifaceted, and is only one part of a complex health care system.

It has been said about the CLS profession, “if we could only get more recognition,” or “if salaries were better,” then we

would..... No, even if either of these were instantly true the laboratory profession would still be in the same state it is in today. What is lacking is the realization that if CLS practitioners want recognition, higher salaries, licensure, or what ever, then CLS practitioners need to determine their own course. We cannot ask pathologists, hospital administrators, nurses, or our accrediting agencies to determine the future of our profession for us. In the end, those outside the laboratory would just fashion the lab into a form that suited their own needs.

So what does this have to do with the 2003 ASCLS Annual Meeting? One topic discussed at the meeting was whether entry-level CLS practitioners should be prepared at the masters-degree level. Commonly referred to as the “entry-level masters,” here it needs to be clearly stated that ASCLS has not endorsed or even voted upon this issue. The House of Delegates simply voted to authorize a “Futures Committee” to study the issue and make a report in July, 2004. Not surprisingly, there was considerable albeit civil debate about this subject.

Jim Griffith reported on the progress of the Coordinating Council of the Clinical Laboratory Workforce (CCCLW), on which he represents ASCLS. Imagine numerous laboratory organizations have been working together since June 2000 to address the personnel shortage. Yes, it’s amazing, and further evidence our profession is not only surviving, but taking charge of it’s own future.

(continued on page 6)

The 3 R's: Recruitment, Retention, Relief

Terry Jo Gile and Shirlyn McKenzie

There are visible and invisible costs associated with turnover. It costs about \$5,000 to replace an employee at one facility in Minnesota. At Fairview Health Services in Minneapolis, Rick Panning reports it costs 1.0 to 1.5 times an employee's salary to recruit and train a new employee. Therefore retaining employees is a great way to keep expenditures down.

Visible costs for staff leaving: Accrued vacation and continued benefits. For replacement: advertising fees; temporary employees; sign-on costs; orientation; training. Invisible costs include lost productivity, scheduling problems, increased recruitment, low morale, loss of knowledge, and disrupted departments.

Training for new grads differs from older recruits; For new grads the first year is developmental especially in blood bank and microbiology; however computer training is no problem. For experienced recruits it generally takes much less time to train within the departments because of the experience factor but computer training can be a challenge.

Staffing for the future depends on the type of lab and its needs: Highly automated lab: CLS to CLT ratio 1:10; a high level of problem solving is required: Career ladders and tuition reimbursement help with retention.

There is a great need to increase the visibility of the profession in order to recruit into the profession. If your target group is children, create fun things for them to do related to science, for example a lesson on germs. For teens, judging at science fairs or helping with science fair projects may be effective. For college students: jobs, scholarships or loans. Lab tours for high school science teachers may be effective in improving the visibility of the clinical laboratory profession. Offer to assist in the classroom, provide informational tours and contribute to the education of CLS and CLT students. Clinical

sites might offer to provide part-time instructors.

Other suggestions:

Contribute supplies

Offer computer based programs

Provide instructional tools

Recruitment:

Traditional Advertisements

Local: paid and free

Head hunter

Web sites

Placement agencies

National ads (Advance)

Phone-A-Thon

Quote a happy employee in ad

Organizational values

Work environment

Unusual benefits: 401K, wellness center, tuition reimbursement

Opportunities: ie. "Come work in Garner, Nevada, where two bicycles and a pickup truck is considered a traffic jam."

Salary

Hiring range (false bottom)

Bonus Incentives

Relocation

Shift differential/weekend incentive

Flexible scheduling

Non traditional Opportunities from downsizing in other facilities

Establish relationships with other managers/labs

Selection:

Don't just hire a warm body! Identify a candidate's top 3 skills and determine how they match your challenges. Identify the development needs of the candidate. Use the candidate's expertise as a learning resource.

Retention tactics:

Keep the ones you have happy. A great deal of keeping employees happy is cultural. Those over 40 years old will usually stay and you can count on them for at least five years. New grads want money and will usually not stay longer than 3 years. They prefer 401K plans, workout

centers, cafeteria style benefits. Medical insurance may not be as important as a comprehensive dental plan.

Try to do something at least monthly:

NMLW

Newsletters with photos

Birthday recognition

Give gag gifts

Award perfect attendance

Give a day off with pay

Have raffles

Balloons

Thank you notes

Reward coupons

Gift certificates

Pot luck meals/food

Pay bonuses

Performance incentives

Grab bag rewards

Top banana award

Job sharing

Lab committees

Bulletin boards

Casual day

Continuing education

Tickets

Other tactics:

Select employees to give tours

Provide science fair judges

Make parking easily accessible/free

Provide memberships: golf, swim pool, gym, YMCA

Allow convention and work-related continuing education trips.

The Mood of your lab:

Paint the walls. If bench tops are black and walls beige, your staff may be “in a funk”.

Red: call to action

Pink: health

Yellow: learning, strength

Orange: caution

Green: fresh, new

White: antiseptic

Gray: efficiency

Beige: fall asleep

Black: void

Brown: sincere

Finally, what makes a facility attractive to a potential employee?

Career development/advancement – 67%

Compensation/benefits –64%

Community reputation –61%

Management style –58%

Corporate culture – 55%

Profitability –52%

Ethical Standards – 45%

Industry –42%



Nomination Committee

The TACLS Nomination Committee announces the following positions to be elected at the next election:

President-Elect

Secretary

Board of Directors (2)

Nomination Committee

Member of the Year

Nomination forms and acceptance forms are available from Phillip Kostroun, Chair of the Nomination committee (pk01@txstate.edu). Note that the deadline for nominations is

December 15.

Focus on Laboratory Professionals

Lieutenant Jim Jankowski, San Antonio

Jim Jankowski graduated from Southwest Texas State University (now Texas State University) in August 1991 with a BS in Medical Technology. He began his career in Corpus Christi as a bench technologist at Spohn and Driscoll Children's Hospital after graduation. After a year of



employment, he joined the Navy and has been a naval officer for 11 years. He began his tour as Chemistry Supervisor at Naval Medical Center, Oakland, California. After three years there, Jim transferred to the US Naval Hospital, Okinawa, Japan and served as Hematology, Phlebotomy and Microbiology Supervisor as well as Blood Bank Quality Assurance Officer. After his overseas tour, he was selected for an out-service scholarship program and completed his Masters of Education degree at in Biology at Texas State in the summer of 2000. His next assignment was Head, Laboratory Department, Naval Hospital,

Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. While serving at Guantanamo, Jim was responsible for laboratory services to military personnel and the terrorists who have been confined their since late 2001. Jim saw several cases of malaria, and many other tropical diseases in these prisoners. Jim also wrote SOP's, prepared for inspections, and trained technical staff. Jim's current assignment is Instructor of Clinical Laboratory Medicine for the Interservice Physician Assistant Program at FT Sam Houston, Texas. Jim enjoys teaching the PA students how to use laboratory test results in the diagnosis and treatment of their patients. They use case studies to help the students correlate laboratory data with other clinical information. Jim enjoys teaching and hopes to be assigned to the Naval School of Health Science and teach in the laboratory school. Jim has enjoyed his career as a laboratory officer, after only one year as a bench tech, he quickly moved into a supervisory role with responsibilities in all areas of the laboratory.

ASCLS Recommends Name Change for State Societies

Dave Falleur

The ASCLS Leadership has suggested that all state societies change their name to include ASCLS as part of the name. For example TACLS would become ASCLS-TACLS. The change might improve the visibility of ASCLS and state societies around the country. The name change would require changes in bylaws, replacement of letterhead, changes in publications, etc. Becky See, TACLS President, would like to know how you feel about the name change. Please send your comments to Becky via e-mail, bsee@giveblood.com. We will also be posting a survey on the TACLS website.



Give Us Your Voice VOICE – VALUE – VISION

Becky See, TACLS President

ASCLS and TACLS strive to be the **voice** of each laboratory professional in the workplace, classroom, community and legislative arenas. We promote the **value** of our profession as the predominant source of objective health data, as knowledgeable members of the health care team and as competent contributors to quality patient care. Finally we define the **vision** of our future by preparing both the profession and its practitioners for exciting new and expanded roles.

Don't you want to add your **voice** to help promote the **value** of our profession and also to help define the **vision** of our future? TACLS needs you! We are putting together our projects for this year and need your talents. We are looking for creative, energetic people to help us make a difference in the lives we help in the health care field.

Our next meeting will be in Houston on October 18, at the Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center. We will have a guest speaker at 10 am with our Business meeting to follow.

Please come and give us your ideas, your help and your support. If you are unable to attend, please send your ideas to me at bsee@giveblood.org.

Some of our projects are:

- Promoting our Public Service Announcement
- Developing a new section on the TACLS web site (www.tacls.org) to answer questions about the laboratory profession
- Contacting our lapsed members
- Preparing for our Annual meeting in Houston on April 1-3, 2004.

We are looking for your thoughts and help with these projects and also your ideas for new ones. These projects are just a few of the ways in which TACLS represents the **Voice, Value** and **Vision** of your profession. Keep visiting the TACLS web site for new and exciting changes. **I'll see you in Houston on October 18th.**



A Quiet Declaration of Self-Determination

(continued from page 1)

As in previous years, AACC and ASCLS scheduled their annual meetings around the Clinical Lab Expo. Expo attendees learned about hundreds of new products and instruments by walking the exhibit hall and chatting with the company reps. This year's ASCLS Meeting had scientific sessions for every discipline and lots of opportunity for continuing education, issues forums, roundtables, and of course laughing and socializing with colleagues. The 2nd annual "Tennessee n' Texas (TnT) Boot Scoot Boogie" was well-attended and even more fun than last year's.

Coming home from my fourth ASCLS Annual Meeting, I am encouraged. At least a few hundred laboratorians care enough about their profession to invest the time and money to attend. I know there are legitimate reasons why many can't make it, but on the other hand I believe we all make time and find money for what we really want to do. I hope that more in the laboratory community discover the rewards of participation. I want to thank our 12 Texas delegates and alternates, as well as all the non-delegate TACLS members for proudly representing the Lone Star State.



Becky See, Christi Thompson, and John Wentz

Texas Clinical Laboratory Educators Meet in Dallas

Dave Falleur



CLS and CLT program directors representing ten programs met in Dallas on August 15. After lunch at the Faculty Club the meeting was held in the Biomedical Sciences Research Building. Topics that were discussed included laboratory staffing problems and graduate programs. There also was discussion about the cost of clinical programs in comparison with other allied health fields. Finally, a problem that continues to persist is the need to educate Human Resources departments about the correct terminology for clinical laboratory professionals, and the added value of NCA credentials.

Karen McClure is heading up the new electronic version of Student Bowl which will be pilot tested with her former students. The cost for developing the program will be about \$1000. We will be asking for support from vendors and TACLS. If you would like to contribute questions, please send them to Karen. Her e-mail address is kmclure@mail.mdanderson.org.



COME JOIN US

The Texas Association for Clinical Laboratory Science is inviting you to join us for education, networking, and also to find out what new and exciting things TACLS is doing and how you can help!

Guest Speaker: Vicki Hopwood

Topic : “The Genetics of Paroxysmal Nocturnal Hemoglobinuria (PNH): Implications for Transfusion Medicine”

Date and Time : Saturday, October 18, 10:00 am

**Where : Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center
Jesse Jones Building
1400 LaConcha
Houston**

Approved for PACE Credit

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