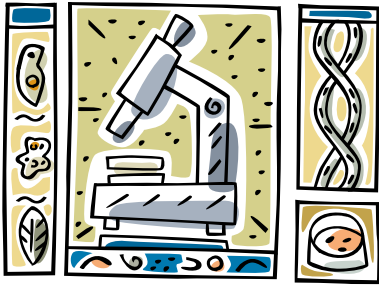


September 2004



*Texas Association for Clinical Laboratory Science*

# TACLS News

## Education Special Edition

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### A Message from the President

Christie Thompson, Ed.D., TACLS President



The September TACLS News is dedicated to clinical laboratory science education, educators, students and graduates. Texas is fortunate to have many quality clinical laboratory technician and clinical laboratory scientist educational programs and the students graduating from these programs will be the leaders of our profession in the next few years. This newsletter will highlight some of the programs TACLS and ASCLS provides to support clinical laboratory science education.

For several years, Dave Falleur has provided the leadership for Texas CLEC. The meeting, which was held in Dallas this year, provides the opportunity to discuss CLT/CLS program issues. The national CLEC meeting will be in San Antonio in 2006 and will provide an opportunity for educators in Texas to discuss issues with other educators throughout the nation.

This year ASCP has followed the leadership of NCA and included the requirement for continuing certification in order to maintain certification. TACLS has always provided quality continuing education for laboratory professionals in the state and, this year, there will be CE opportunities before the Fall Board Meeting, October 9, in Houston; at

the winter board meeting, in San Antonio; and at the annual meeting in Corpus Christi. We will also provide continuing education opportunities throughout the State and through the web site. If you want a program in your area, check the website ([www.tacls.org](http://www.tacls.org)) or email me for additional information.

TACLS and CLS/CLT program faculty organize the annual student bowls during the State meeting. We encourage all students to participate in the competition at the Corpus Christi meeting and, while you are at the meeting, join the audience to watch the matches.

The ASCLS and TACLS websites have information for graduates, current students and educators about programs, scholarships and employment opportunities. In the next few weeks, ASCLS will have information on the recently completed model career ladder and this edition of TACLS News provides a preview of that important document.

I want to thank the dedicated TACLS members who work diligently to provide these and other services for educators, students and graduates. But we need more participation. If you have not been active in the organization, contact me or any board member and we will match you with an area that will take advantage of your skills. If you are not a member or if your membership has lapsed, please join or rejoin ASCLS. If your co-workers are not members of ASCLS, tell them about the benefits of membership and direct them to the information on the ASCLS website. If you work with students, encourage them to join and to become active as they move into their profession.

We look forward to an exciting and productive year. Join us.

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# Texas Clinical Laboratory Educators Meet in Dallas

Dave Falleur, TACLS News Editor

Over 30 CLS and CLT program directors and faculty representing most of the programs in Texas met in Dallas on August 13. Lunch at the Faculty Club was followed by the meeting which was approved for PACE continuing education credit. At the luncheon, Joan Aldrich was presented with a gift certificate in recognition of her many years of service to TACLS and 20 years as a faculty member in the Medical Laboratory Sciences Department at UT Southwestern Medical Center.



questions, please send them to Karen. Her e-mail address is [kmclure@mail.mdanderson.org](mailto:kmclure@mail.mdanderson.org). Theresa Spain is heading up the CLT Student Bowl activities which include developing new questions and moving towards a more visually oriented presentation of questions and information following the model of the CLS Student Bowl..

Following the meeting, the CLT educators discussed a distance learning program that is being developed between Delmar College, Austin Community College, Tyler Junior College, and St.Philip's College. This joint effort will provide CLT students with the opportunity to take courses and receive an AAS degree on-line and is partially supported by a state grant. For more information see page 6.

Topics that were discussed included new state requirements for immunizations, teaching molecular diagnostic testing and SACS accreditation requirements for faculty credentials. There also was discussion about the cost of clinical programs in comparison with other allied health fields, lab and course fees, and changes in tuition.

Karen McClure is still working with the development of an electronic version of Student Bowl for CLS students. The new version will not be ready in time for the Corpus Christi meeting. If you would like to contribute



## Benefits of a Career Ladder

Karen McClure, MS, CLS, MT(ASCP), SBB

The ability of consumers to rely upon access to quality clinical laboratory testing is threatened by the rapidly deteriorating supply of clinical laboratory personnel. The aging population demands more health care and more tests; new tests are frequently being introduced in laboratory medicine to improve diagnosis and quality of care; and the threat of bioterrorism have all played a role in the increased demand for qualified laboratory professionals.

A career ladder would address the current shortage of laboratory personnel by increasing public awareness, increasing credibility and respect of laboratory personnel and increasing the retention of current laboratory employees. The identified additional options for advancement, outlined in the Model Career Ladder developed by an ASCLS taskforce, would increase retention of current employees. The scope of practice and definition of the roles for the clinical laboratory technician and the clinical laboratory scientist are important aspects of the clinical laboratory and the career ladder outlines an additional delineation of these roles and allows for better utilization of laboratory personnel.

Research into turnover reveals that a leading reason for the high turnover in health care is professional disillusionment. Increased turnover is also influenced by a more independent and mobile workforce. Today's workers have seen numerous rounds of layoff and downsizing thus the message is to look after yourself and your best interests; job loyalty is at an all time low. Now as the outlook for job prospects abounds in the healthcare arena employers will need to work harder to retain skilled employees.

The cost of employee turnover is high; an estimated 150% of an employee's annual compensation, when expenses for recruiting, hiring, and training new employees are calculated. While some turnover in positions can be expected, the frequency in the number can be reduced.

A career ladder provides an excellent resource for employers to provide a viable mechanism to use for the professional development of their CLT/CLS employees. A clearly outlined means of advancement and personal satisfaction can be achieved through a career ladder and will help the employee feel that he/she is a valuable member of the health care team.

Finally, the model provides for increased patient safety and financial benefits to the patient, third party payers and health care providers. As experts in clinical laboratory testing and the interpretation of laboratory tests, the clinical laboratory scientist and the advanced practice scientist provide consultation to other health care providers to improve patient outcome and prevent unnecessary tests. Research and presentation of the research by laboratory personnel provide future benefits to patient safety and laboratory test utilization.



Thus the need to implement a career ladder for the practicing CLT/CLS is critical to the future success of the profession. Employers with well-defined career advancement opportunities will have a definite advantage in the competitive healthcare employee marketplace and CLT/CLSs will be given the opportunity to advance through the development of additional skills. This is a win-win solution for all parties, patients, employers and employees.

For additional information on this topic, read the ASCLS position paper on the Scope of Practice at

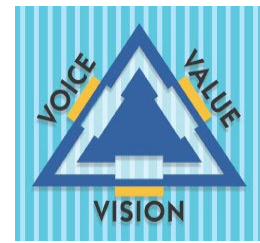
[http://www.ascls.org/position/scope\\_of\\_practice.asp](http://www.ascls.org/position/scope_of_practice.asp).

Karen McClure, MS CLS(NCA), MT(ASCP), SBB, is President Elect of TACLS and an Assistant Professor and Director of the CLS Program at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center



# What Have ASCLS and TACLS Done for Me Lately?

Dave Falleur, TACLS News Editor



A few months ago you received your dues notice from ASCLS and probably like me, wondered, what have ASCLS and TACLS done for me lately? The journal *Clinical Laboratory Science* and the monthly newsletter *ASCLS Today* as well as the *TACLS News* newsletter are visible evidence of the benefits of membership in a professional organization. Some of the activities that are less visible but just as important include the following:

## TACLS Activities

Planning for a statewide conference every year.

Planning for a Fall and Winter Members meeting which has continuing education opportunities.

Publishing a monthly newsletter, and maintaining a website to inform members of upcoming activities.

Holding a statewide meeting of Clinical Laboratory Educators every year.

Developing and distributing a public service announcement which has been aired on television stations around the state.

Monitoring and advocating new legislation which may effect clinical laboratory professionals in Texas.

Raising funds for the Children's Miracle Network.

## ASCLS Activities

Providing Continuing Education activities through its national meeting, website, and publications.

Providing leadership opportunities for laboratory professionals at the local, state, regional, and national level.

Supporting research and professional development through its refereed journal, *Clinical Laboratory Science* and research awards for outstanding scholarship.

Participating in the legislative arena with the Legislative Symposium.

Publishing position papers which address common concerns and solutions to problems in laboratory education, workforce, reimbursement, and other critical issues.

Supporting the website [Labtestsonline.org](http://Labtestsonline.org)

Establishing scholarships for CLS and CLT students and continuing education scholarships for laboratory practitioners.

Co-sponsoring National Medical Laboratory Week.

No other national laboratory organization does as much for clinical laboratory science practitioners as ASCLS. No other Texas organization represents the laboratory profession as well as TACLS. Thank you for your continued support.

## How TACLS Will Help You Maintain Your Certification

Dave Falleur, TACLS News Editor

If you have an NCA certificate you are aware that every three years you must document your continued competence by providing evidence of continuing education. The NCA requires 36 CEUs .

The ASCP Board of Registry has recently adopted a similar requirement for certificants beginning in 2004. This requirement will not be mandatory for those who were certified before 2004. A voluntary program is available for those who were certified before 2004.

The Certification Maintenance Program. requires 36 points of documented continued competency every three years for all categories except Phlebotomy Technician (PBT). For PBT, 9 points are required every three years. One point can be awarded for each continuing education hour. Upon successful completion of the Certification Maintenance Program, the certificant will be permitted to use the initials "CM" for "certification maintained" in superscript as part of their certification designation. For example, a medical technologist who successfully finished the program will have the designation MT(ASCP)CM after their name. In order to meet this requirement the applicant must complete the required activities.

For MT and MLT, the following points must be accumulated during the three year period following certification:

- \* 2 points minimum in each of the following domains: blood banking, chemistry, hematology, immunology, microbiology)
- \* 1 point minimum in safety

\* Remaining points in the area(s) of laboratory specialty, management education, or other related laboratory areas of interest.

For other laboratory certifications (PBT, AT, DPT, HT, HTL, CT, BB, C, H, M, MP), the following points are required within the three year period:

- \* 1 point minimum in safety
- \* 2 points minimum in the area in which you are certified

Remaining points can be in the area of specialty, management, education, or other related laboratory areas of interest.

Before the three-year period has expired, certificants will be required to submit a declaration of completed activities and the required fee to the Board of Registry office. A percentage of declarations will be audited and individuals who are audited will be required to submit documentation of the activities they completed. Individuals who successfully complete the program will receive a new certificate valid for an additional three years. The Certification Maintenance Program must be completed every three years.



TACLS will be providing continuing education opportunities for certified laboratory professionals to meet these requirements. The TACLS annual meeting in Corpus Christi will provide an opportunity to obtain up to 20 contact hours of continuing education credit. ASCLS offers CE on its website and through the journal, *Clinical Laboratory Science*. Maintaining professional competency is a major reason for belonging to a professional organization. ASCLS and TACLS are ready to help you maintain the NCA and ASCP certificates you worked so hard to earn.

## MLT Degree On-Line

Terry Kotrla, Austin Community College

In May 2004 Austin Community College, Tyler Junior College, St. Phillip's Community College and Del Mar Community College received a grant to offer the Medical Laboratory Technology degree online through Virtual College of Texas (VCT). ACC is the lead college on the grant and Terry Kotrla is the Project Director. VCT is a collaborative of Texas' fifty community college districts and the Texas State Technical College System. Through VCT, students may register at their local colleges to take credit and non-credit distance learning courses from other colleges throughout Texas.

The VCT initiative was launched in the fall semester of 1998 and established as an ongoing service in fall 2001. VCT wishes to take this project to the next level by offering students the opportunity to earn degrees online. There is an increasing shortage of Medical Laboratory Technology graduates, especially in rural, under-served areas. This collaborative effort of the four colleges addresses the state mandate "Closing the Gaps" by increasing access to an MLT program for students throughout Texas. The four colleges were awarded a "Closing the Gaps" grant in 2002-2003. The consortium is now taking it to the next level to offer the entire degree online. VCT will allow any student who attends any state college, especially those in rural or remote areas, to complete the MLT AAS degree online. The project is based on the host provider model; students take courses from any providing institution as long as 25% of the courses are earned at the degree awarding institution.

Terry Kotrla visited an MLT consortium composed of four colleges in Illinois. The programs collaborated on creating all course

materials which are used by all partners. The coursework can be completed in the traditional on-campus mode, hybrid (self-instructional units plus classroom) or totally online with visits to campus to demonstrate competency in their skills.

The VCT grant model proposes that students in rural areas will find a laboratory to sponsor the practice of and gain competence in their skills, complete the didactic coursework online, and visit campus twice per year to demonstrate competency of their skills by the sponsoring MLT program. Terry will visit a program in Arkansas later this year which has perfected a system for the clinical component of distance education. This is a win-win situation for all partners in the consortium as well as other MLT programs in the state. In many instances, students have to drop out for a semester due to unforeseen circumstances. Having all coursework online will allow these students an opportunity to make up the missed courses and graduate on time.

For more information about the program contact Terry Kotrla, [kotrla@austincc.edu](mailto:kotrla@austincc.edu).



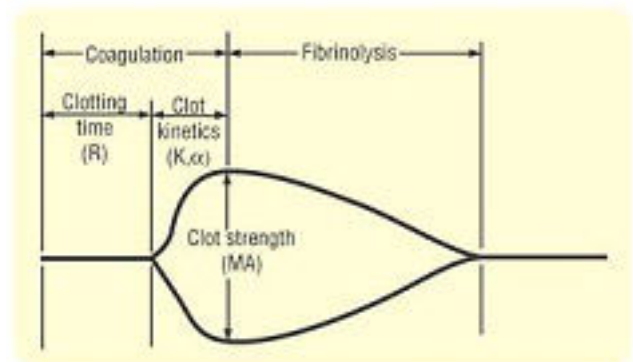
## TACLS Fall Board Meeting

# TEG: Thromboelastograph

Kimberly P. Murray, CLSpH, CLS (NCA), MT(ASCP)SH  
Instructor, The School of Health Sciences  
U.T. M. D. Anderson Cancer Center

Approved for 1.0 CEU of PACE Credit

Saturday, October 9, 10:00 AM  
University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center  
Houston Main Building, 10.123 Room 3  
Houston, Texas



**Mark your calendar now**



TACLS Fall Board Meeting  
and CE Program  
Saturday, October 9  
M.D. Anderson, Houston

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