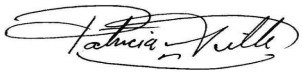
Editorial

Advancing the Laboratory Profession!

Patricia Tille Ph.D MLS(ASCP) AHI (AMT) FASCs
IJBLS Editor in Chief

The laboratory science profession has struggled for decades with defining the value of the laboratory along with advancing the profession in health care. This past year, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services in the United States (US) made significant changes to the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA). The ruling covers several major points. 1) Changed the definition of the traditional continuing medical education (CME) credits to include other opportunities for continuing education. This supports the role of others outside of medical doctors serving as laboratory directors. 2) Removed physical science as a qualifying degree for laboratory science. 3) Strengthened the language regarding those qualified to perform moderate and high complexity laboratory testing. 4) Removed nursing as a degree to qualify for a laboratory director under § 493.1405(b). 5) Support the standardization in nomenclature within the United States for baccalaureate degree professionals as medical laboratory scientists. 6) Supported and confirmed that the Doctor of Clinical Laboratory Scientist (DCLS) is a qualifying degree for a high complexity laboratory director (HCLD) provided they have the requisite experience and past a certification exam. These are all major milestones that will elevate the laboratory profession within the US health system.

Let's look at the DCLS a little closer. The DCLS is a clinical professional doctoral program designed to prepare graduate laboratory professionals with prior clinical training for advanced clinical practice and teaching careers in medical laboratory science. "The DCLS increases diagnostic efficiency, facilitates patient management outcomes, and improves timely access to accurate and appropriate laboratory information by participating directly in patient care decisions, monitoring laboratory utilization, and conducting research on the diagnostic process." Individuals with a DCLS are experts in clinical laboratory testing. The DCLS contributes to increasing laboratory efficiency, improves timely access to accurate and appropriate laboratory information through appropriate test selection and interpretation of test results; monitoring laboratory data and testing processes, and directs laboratory operations to comply with all state and Federal laws and regulations. A DCLS plays a critical role in ensuring high quality, appropriate patient care by overseeing the clinical, scientific and related operational aspects of the diagnostic laboratory. The scope of laboratories has become increasingly complex requiring an HCLD to have a combination of technical and medical knowledge related to laboratory methods and the limitations to ensure quality and accuracy of laboratory results. The advancement of the laboratory profession will continue to grow with the increasing demand for a higher level of knowledge and practitioners. It is also important to acknowledge that we have multiple masters level practitioners and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) professionals that have been working throughout the field of laboratory science for many decades. The DCLS does not replace the expertise and value provided by those professionals, it expands and strengthens the professional expertise across all clinically relevant fields. Now is the time for the laboratory profession to continue to grow and for others in health care and the public to understand the significant role laboratory plays in their daily care!



Patricia Tille Ph.D. MLS(ASCP) AHI(AMT) FACSc