

Bayou Tech

Louisiana Society for Clinical Laboratory Science
An Affiliate of American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science



Edited By: Evan Ashley & Mallory McCarty

A Word from the President: Stephanie Blackburn MHS, MLS (ASCP)^{cm}

Summer is here!

We ended the spring with a wonderful LSCLS/ASCLS-MS Bi-State Meeting hosted by Mississippi. Everyone that attended the meeting in Biloxi had a great time and enjoyed the variety of speakers.

Congratulations to all of the LSCLS Awards Winners this year! You were all very deserving and are an asset to our society and profession. Congratulations to the LSU-New Orleans students for winning the MLS Student Bowl competition this year. It takes a great deal of preparation prior to the competition and all of the teams did an excellent job of representing their universities.



*“WE ARE THE
VOICE for our
profession!”*

- Stephanie Blackburn

I would also like to recognize all of the spring graduates from MLS and MLT programs. You have worked hard over the past few years and now it is time for you to join the workforce. I encourage all of you to renew your ASCLS membership and become a First Year Professional. You are a valuable member to our society and we want you to stay involved in your profession.

It's not too late to register for the 2014 ASCLS Annual Meeting in Chicago, July 30 – August 2. As always, the meeting will be filled with intriguing continuing education opportunities, as well as discussions regarding concerns and issues within the healthcare system and how it affects laboratory professionals.

DON'T FORGET...Now is the time to renew your ASCLS and LSCLS memberships! Remember that WE ARE THE VOICE for our profession!

I look forward to seeing you in Chicago!

Stephanie

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Legislators Rock Our World

LEGISLATORS ROCK OUR WORLD

Many laboratory professionals find regulations and legislation boring and something to avoid, but laboratorians must be aware of the legislative process and its impact on our practice field. No longer can we ignore the governmental arena and be successful as a profession. We cannot adopt a “let someone else do it” attitude and remain viable as a profession. If EACH ONE of us does not care enough to be engaged in legislation and regulations affecting this profession, no one else will.

When you are asked to contact your state or Congressional legislators or a government agency, it is important to do that. In Louisiana a couple of years ago, it was the grassroots effort around the state that won the battle against a major challenge to our licensure law. There is power in grassroots effort!

So far, the 2014 Louisiana legislature has not had any bill introduced affecting the laboratory, but there has been continued governmental impact to the laboratory at the national level this past year.

Clinical laboratory reimbursement has had deep cuts as part of healthcare reform with a direct and immediate Part B Medicare Clinical Laboratory Fee Schedule cut with 1.75% each year 2011-2015. This 9% cut is the largest among all Medicare B providers. Clinical laboratories have also received a productivity adjustment (one of only a few providers subject to an immediate adjustment in 2011) resulting in an additional 11% cut over 10 years. Together, these 2 adjustments will result in a cumulative 20% cut over 10 years. Additional laboratory cuts include 2% in 2012 as part of the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act and, beginning 4-1-13 another 2% cut as a result of sequestration. All of these cuts to the laboratory Fee Schedule have occurred despite the **laboratory reimbursement being less than 2% of all Medicare spending**; the laboratory has also been subject to significant freezes in payments and cuts over the past 20 years. Medicare payment amounts for clinical laboratory services have been reduced by about 40% in real (inflation adjusted) terms over these 2 decades. Laboratory Medicare Part B reimbursement is a prime example of government impact on the laboratory and one that has created a very tight economic environment in the clinical laboratory.

At the ASCLS Legislative Symposium in March of this year, members from across the nation came together to learn about the main issues impacting the laboratory and to lobby on the Hill regarding these issues. Laboratory reimbursement was one major issue discussed with Congressional offices. A second major issue was asking Congressional leaders to support the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act. The personnel shortage in the laboratory remains worse than that of both the nursing and pharmacy personnel shortages. Legislative action will and does directly affect our profession.

It is incumbent on each of us to be involved by lobbying Congressional leaders when asked to do so by ASCLS or LSCLS. It is also incumbent on us to not only educate ourselves how legislators can rock our laboratory world but to recruit nonmembers as ASCLS members and educate them, too. Again, many laboratorians do not understand the importance of being active and responsive to lobbying requests in the governmental arena. This, too, is shortsighted and can directly impact both the professional and the profession. ASCLS has an active lobby in Washington, D.C. These lobbyists tell us how effective our annual Hill visits as part of the Legislative Symposium are; just think of the greater impact if each of us was involved and made a point to let nonmembers know the impact we ASCLS members have in this arena and the need for them to join with us.

Governmental actions will continue to impact our field and our voice will continue to be less than it could be if most of our colleagues do not understand how governmental action can affect this field and fail to act when asked. ASCLS is the voice of the profession and the larger the membership, the stronger the voice—be an advocate for the profession and for your professional organization. It will make a difference!

Cheryl Caskey

Government Affairs Committee Chair

Student Forum Update

As my year as Louisiana Student Forum Chair comes to an end, I think back on the experiences I have had and the knowledge I have gained. My first LSCLS meeting was in Alexandria in 2013. A fellow classmate nominated me for Chair and I won the election. I was not sure what to expect and I will admit that I was very nervous and did not know if I could handle such a huge responsibility. My year representing the students of Louisiana was an unbelievable experience. I did not realize how much passion I could have for a career that I had not yet begun. I attended the ASCLS National Meeting in Houston in 2013. There I met many students and first year professionals that loved the field just as much as I did. It reassured me that there are people out there who truly loved and cared about this career. I enjoyed the educational sessions and the expo and I can't wait to go back this year. My passion grew tremendously. The Legislative Symposium was very exciting. I did not know the first thing about politics and how medical laboratory scientists fit into government affairs. The Symposium really opened my eyes to the political side of our field and I found a new love for our profession and politics. I honestly can't wait to learn more about government issues that involve the medical field and how they affect us. Being able to bring back my knowledge to my fellow classmates, co-workers, and other professionals just made these experiences more enjoyable.

Being Student Forum Chair has opened many doors for me. I would like to thank my professors, advisors, and my classmates at Our Lady of the Lake College for their encouragement and support. I would also like to thank my supervisors and co-workers at Ochsner's Medical Center in New Orleans for allowing me to be a part of LSCLS and ASCLS. I will continue to my role at First Year Professional and help students and other FYP. I would like to introduce the new officers; Chair is Syrita Steib from LSU-NO, Co-Chair Elizabeth Ezeb from LSU-NO, and Secretary Carrie Nordman from ULM. Congratulations to our winners. The next year will be a remarkable journey.

Gretchen Brocksmith

From Bench Tech to Space

Back in 1956, I was a young Medical Technologist. Had just finished my year of Internship at St. Francis Medical Center Laboratory and graduated from Northeast Louisiana State College, now U.L.M. here in Monroe, LA. After graduation, I was asked to work as a Registered Medical Technologist at St. Francis Laboratory until time to be called into the U.S. Army as a Second Lieutenant. I had gone through the four year Army program called R.O.T.C. to obtain my Commission as a Second Lieutenant.

Note: I did not know that a Registered Medical Technologist could obtain a Direct Commission as a First Lieutenant. This is something that all Medical Technologists should know. This is an excellent opportunity to become an Officer in the U.S. Army Medical Services.

Young Med. Techs were called "Bench Techs". We did routine Laboratory work, which included drawing blood from all of our patients. There was no such thing as Phlebotomy in the 1950's. We did it all. We would draw, process our samples and chart the results. I enjoyed working in Chemistry, Hematology and Bacteriology.

My orders from the Army came in about a year after working in the St. Francis Laboratory. I was to report to Ft. Knox, Kentucky, U.S. Army Medical Research Laboratory. My assignment was to set up and operate a Clinical Laboratory that was to support all types of Military Medical Research. I could not believe that just a year ago, I was a Bench Tech and now operating a complete Clinical Laboratory.

In the process of setting up the basic departments of the laboratory, something very unusual happened. My Commanding Officer asked me to work with the Psychology Department and train two Rhesus Monkeys to do a simple task.

I asked, "Why were we doing this testing on these monkeys?" My Commanding Officer told me that it was TOP SECRET at this time. He said, "Just get it done and fast." Our job was to train these monkeys to press a switch, sort of like a doorbell. They must press this switch every sixty seconds.

In the beginning, we had to give the monkeys a low voltage shock in their toe if they did not press the key every sixty seconds. Over a period of six months, both of the Rhesus monkeys would do this for four hours each day. They never needed a small shock again. I ran complete blood counts and throat cultures on them every two weeks. Rhesus monkeys are prone to throat infections.

Back in 1959, Dwight Eisenhower was President of the United States. He was very upset with our Space Program. Russia, in 1957 launched SPUTNIK in the skies and it was sending important data back to Russia. They were right on the verge of sending a human in to space. Our Space program had nothing like this. We were falling behind in the "Space Race".

Before a human could be sent into space, we had to find out if a human could stand the stress of 36 times the force of gravity when the missile was launched. No one knew at this time if a human could take this amount of stress.

We packed up our two trained Rhesus Monkeys and went to Cape Canaveral. This was one of the biggest thrills of my life. I could not believe that we were there watching Atlas missiles from the Air Force, Jupiter missiles from the Army and Polaris missiles from the Navy being tested. The Army Jupiter Rocket was the brainchild of Wernher von Braun, a German Space Scientist that came to the United States after WWII. This Jupiter rocket is used to carry an atomic warhead in the nose cone. The nose cone was cleared to carry our Rhesus Monkey into space.

We had to test each of the two Rhesus monkeys and select the healthiest one to make the trip. The monkey was placed in a special made couch and he could press the key right at his fingertips. Here was the plan. On May 28, 1959, the Rhesus monkey was to press the key every sixty seconds during lift off, all through the flight into the edge of Space and back to the Atlantic Ocean. This was a 1600 mile trip and it was to take only 16 minutes.

Everything went off perfectly. The monkey pressed the key all the way through the trip. When he pressed the key, this signal was transmitted back to Cape Canaveral. This proved that no brain damage was done during the flight. President Eisenhower was thrilled. Next it was time for a HUMAN in Space.

The first seven Astronauts had just been selected. They were Alan Shepard, Gus Grissom, John Glenn, Scott Carpenter, Wally Schirra, Gordon Cooper and Deke Slayton. All of these brand new astronauts were at Cape Canaveral watching our experiment.

On May 5, 1961 Alan Shepard was placed in a nose cone of a Jupiter Rocket and he made the exact same trip as our Rhesus monkey did in 1959. This was the beginning of the Space Program for the United States. It was called the "Mercury Project".

I have great memories being in on the "Ground Floor" of the Space Program. Shortly after our experiment, Congress combined Army, Navy and Air Force Space Research and this was the beginning of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. We now call this NASA.

My two years in the Military at the U.S. Army Medical Research Laboratory were most interesting. I returned to St. Francis Medical Center and worked with teaching future Medical Technologists for many years.

1st. Lt. Bill Wilson MT (ASCP)

Assistant Laboratory Manager

St. Francis Medical Center (Ret)

Leg Day

This was my first year attending the Legislative Symposium and before coming to D.C., I did some research on the main topics that would be discussed such as the substantial growth rate (SGR), and the cuts the government wants to take with the lab budget. Of course, most of that information went straight over my head. There were so many legislative parties that had their own agenda on how the government should spend the money and what the lab needed; it was all very confusing.

With all this in mind, I was very eager to come to Washington, D.C. to get a clear idea of where we stand as medical laboratory scientists. Patrick Cooney, the Legislative Consultant, explained how Congress worked, what the Budget meant for the lab and Medicare, and the Clinical Laboratory Regulatory Issues. Once becoming familiar with the acronyms and how the legislation operates, my passion and interest for my profession quickly overcame my anxiety. I understood where the government stood on issues concerning the lab, became very intrigued, and wanted to learn more to be able to share with other students.

One issue concerning the lab is the clinical laboratory payment. Through the Affordable Care Act, clinical labs will suffer deep cuts. As members of ASCLS we are committed to ensuring high quality of laboratory testing to all patients. However, the current trend in cuts is jeopardizing patient care. Cuts are coming from such services Part B providers and the clinical laboratory reimbursement to help pay for physician SGR. These cuts will result in over 20% to the lab over the next 10 years. It will also make it difficult to hire and retain qualified individuals. Many of the members of ASCLS asked our Senators and Representatives to reject further lab cuts to clinical testing.

Another major issue facing the lab is the Clinical Lab Fee Schedule. This was established in 30 years ago and since that time, the Fee Schedule has yet to be updated. Some tests that were considered esoteric are now considered routine and other tests that exist today were considered impossible years ago. The Fee Schedule has not been updated to reflect the changes in the lab or in today's society. We want Congress to take a look at the fee schedule, include us in the decision process, and work on modernizing the fee schedule so that tests are appropriately valued and reimbursed.

After meeting with Senators and Representatives, I found yet another reason to stand up for our profession. The government has a lot of control of the lab and our spending. As students and FYPs, we are given the responsibility to make our profession known and take control over the cuts. I urge everyone to take a look at these issues and give medical laboratory scientists a voice so changes can be made. After attending the Symposium and listening to what other students had to say, I believe we can make a huge impact on healthcare, patient care and, of course, the field of medical technology. I do believe what Patrick Cooney said in his closing speech to us, which is, that one day a medical technologist will be in D.C. lobbying for us every day.

Gretchen Brocksmith, MLS(ASCP)

Student Rep GAC, Region VII, Student Forum Chair of Louisiana



2014 LSCLS/MS-ASCLS



Bi-State Meeting Awards

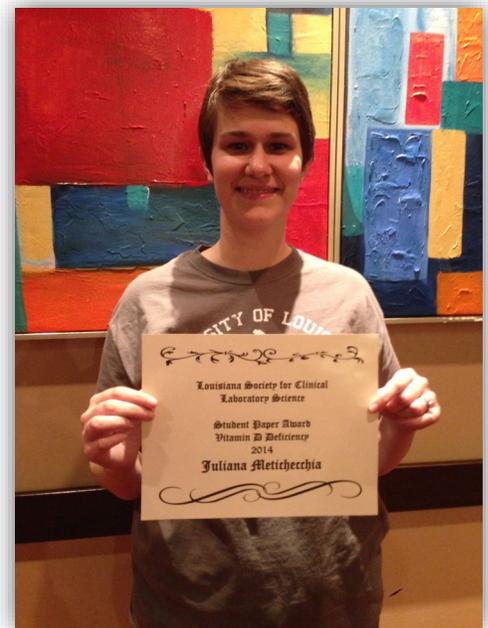


Student of the Year

Gretchen Brocksmith

Educator of the Year

Stephanie Blackburn



Member of the Year

Jessica Lasiter

Student Paper Award

Juliana Kemege- Vitamin D Deficiency



Student Bowl First Place-

LSU NO Team 2

From Left to Right

Amy Cammarata

Sarah Sherrill

Sharon Rainey

Christine Lentz

Brittany Lorenzen

Student Bowl Second Place-

LSU NO Team 1

From Left to Right

Elizabeth Ezeb

Laura Dickey

Ryan Chaplain

Syrita Steib

Tessa Williams





Presidential Service Award

Maegan Fryday

Debbie Wisenor (Not Shown)

Keys to the Future

Evan Ashley

Rosalie Hendrix

Omicron Sigma- State

Maegan Fryday

Jessica Lasiter

Evan Ashley

Rosalie Hendrix

Debbie Wisenor

Joette Taylor

Omicron Sigma- Regional

Michele Werner

Becky See

Chantelle George

Gretchen Brocksmith

Stephanie Blackburn

Omicron Sigma- National

Norma Bivona

Cheryl Caskey

Mary Muslow

Vanessa Johnson

Lynda Britton

Editor's Note

I just wanted to say thanks to all of those who took time out of their schedules to submit articles and pictures. Help us pass this newsletter along by forwarding it to all of your coworkers or by posting it somewhere in your lab. This is just a reminder that we are now accepting ads to go into the newsletter. If anyone has any article that they would like to be put in the next edition of the Bayou Tech send the article to either lasiter@ulm.edu or evan.c.ashley@gmail.com . Also any suggestions of things you would like seen in the newsletter can also be sent to the previous email addresses.

Thanks,

Evan Ashley, MLS (ASCP)^{cm}