

## Technician Careers: Retention, Promotion, and Evolution

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### Who is my audience?

- Pharmacy technicians
- Pharmacist
- Pharmacy managers/Supervisors
- Pharmacy Directors
- Others

### Pharmacist Objectives

- Identify different approaches for retaining technicians
- Be able to design a promotion strategy for technicians
- Justify the importance of technician promotion
- Discuss evolution of the technician career including certification and additional responsibilities for technicians

### Technicians Objectives

- Discuss the different roles of technicians in different industries of pharmacy
- Identify different ways to differentiate yourself in your technician career
- Explain the changes in the technician career
- Justify the importance of technician promotion

### What is a pharmacy technician?

- A person or individual working in a pharmacy who is under the supervision of a licensed pharmacist that assists and supports in most pharmacy activities

### Baptist Health Medical Center – Little Rock

- About 70 person department
- 24hr/day pharmacy services
- FTEs
- Technicians Per day: 12 day techs, 5 evening techs, 2 night techs
- Pharmacists per day: 13 day/evening PDs, 2 night PDs

### Technician Job duties at BHMCLR

- Med dispensing
- Automated Dispensing Cabinet/Carousel experts
- IV/TPN compounding (no chemo)
- High speed repackaging technician
- Satellite pharmacy technicians
- Storeroom technician
- Narcotics technician
- **Carousel Manager**
- **Buyer**
- **Reimbursement Coordinator**
- **340B Coordinator**

- 2013 statistic
  - 350,000 practicing pharmacy technicians in the US
- Current technician duties
  - Dispensing
  - Pharmacy administration
  - Inventory management
  - Disease management
  - Insurance-related inquiries
  - Compounding (TPNs/IVs)
  - Participating in nursing-unit inspections
  - Medication packaging

- Current work environment for technicians
  - Medication-inventory control specialist
  - Intravenous admixture specialist
  - Third-party billing specialist
  - Pharmacy benefits manager
  - Clinical pharmacy technician
  - Pharmacy software specialist
  - Supervisor with tech-check-tech responsibilities
  - Pharmacy department manager
  - Narcotic control technician
  - Medicare Part D specialist
  - Quality assurance/staff development
  - Many others

### Health System (Hospital) Pharmacy technicians

Where Pharmacy Technicians Work (n = 3,200)	
Chain store	43.9%
Hospital	27.3%
Independent store	15.9%
Other	5.2%
Long-term care facility	2.7%
Mail service	2.1%
Managed care facility	1.5%
Military	1.0%
Pharmaceutical industry	0.2%
Educational/vocational program	0.2%

### Hospital Technicians in ARKANSAS

- 6,796 Pharmacy Technicians
- ~18-20% pharmacy technicians work in the hospital in Arkansas
- 186 hospitals in Arkansas

### History Of Hospital Techs

- Late 1950's
  - Pharmacy technicians began working in hospital settings and, with the help of ASHP, technician training programs were set up
  - State laws and regulations were developed to ensure technicians' roles
- Late 1950's-1969
  - Tasks of pharmacy technicians were laid out and distinguished from trained pharmacists
  - Pharmacy technicians started being used in community settings and were being trained on-the-job

- 1971
  - ASHP commits to developing an accredited program for pharmacy technician training
- 1976
  - Standards of practice, standards of competency, mechanisms to evaluate competency, and standards for training of hospital pharmacy "supportive personnel" were developed
- 1982
  - The *ASHP Regulations on Accreditation of Hospital Pharmacy Technician Training Programs* was developed

- 1983
  - The first technician training program was accredited by ASHP at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital
- 2004
  - Ninety-four ASHP-accredited/accreditation-pending technician training programs were established

## Hospital Technician Retention

Why is there turnover?

National average turnover rate ~15%

How can your health system improve technician retention?

## Start at the beginning – hiring the right technicians

### Pre interview Evaluation

- Pharmacy experience required or graduation from pharmacy technician program
- Look for applicants with degrees/Pre-pharmacy
- Pre interview HR survey
- Hiring from within

## Pharmacy technician training programs In Arkansas

- Heritage school
- Remington school
- [Arkansas State University – Beebe](#) – ASHP accredited
- [Mid-South Community College](#) – ASHP accredited
- [National Park Community College](#) – ASHP accredited
- Other online schools

## Accredited training programs by ASHP

- ASHP is the only nationally recognized non-governmental, non-profit pharmacy association that has been accrediting pharmacy residencies since 1962 and pharmacy technician training programs in the United States since 1983.

## Who would you interview?

- 2 yrs exp at local retail pharmacy
- Some compounding experience
- Current Supervisor gives good recommendations
- Pre-interview survey score acceptable
- Graduated from NPCC – tech program
- Shadowed at retail pharmacy
- No recommendation available because limited work history
- Pre-interview survey – proceed with caution
- Can't get prescription filled at local pharmacy because kept trying to get Adderall script filled too soon at multiple pharmacies

## Interview Process

- Group interview
- Set of standard questions
- Require 3 references
- Formal evaluation by each interviewer based on:
  - Experience
  - Skills and knowledge
  - Communication skills
  - Responses to questions
  - Professional Appearance
  - References

## Post interview

- Collect interviewers feedback
- Follow up with references
- Require shadowing
- Rank each candidate

## Hired!

- Trainer/mentor program
- 45 day follow up required
- 90 day probation

## Keeping your technicians

- Effective managers who care about each employee as a person, value their employees' opinions, and provide staff with regular feedback on their performance
- Employee recognition
- Having a promotion strategy to have technicians can strive for improvement/advancement

## Promotion strategies

- Technician promotion strategies
- An ASHP survey in August 2009 showed 56% of organizations offer career advancement opportunities for technicians.
- Is your pharmacy department have a promotion strategy in place for technicians? Pharmacist?

## Benefits of a Technician Promotion Strategy

- Increased job satisfaction
- Incentives for technicians to improve skills and add responsibilities
- Motivation for improving performance, recognition
- Pay increases
- Lower technician turnover
- Increase skill of each technician
- More pharmacist time in patient care activities

## Career Ladder

- General results
  - Lower technician turnover
  - Expansion of technician job responsibilities
  - Increased time for pharmacists' clinical duties

## BHMC Technician Career Ladder

Movement up technician career ladder based on being a National Certified Pharmacy Technician  
 Each step provides 10% increase in pay  
 Movement also based on compounding skills or responsibility in specific areas

## National Certified Pharmacy Technician

- Arkansas state board technician requirements vs. Pharmacy Technician Certification Examination (PTCE)

### • National Certification/Re-certification Program

- Led by Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB)
  - Has administered the Pharmacy Technician Certification Examination (PTCE) for the past 18 years
  - The PTCB certification is accepted as the national standard by more than half of all state boards of pharmacy
  - In order to gain the title of CPhT, a technician must pass the PTCE and complete 20 hours of CE credit within 2 years of original certification

### • PTCE content outline:

- 3 job function areas
  - 66% of the exam is assisting the pharmacist in serving patients
  - 22% of the exam is maintaining medication and inventory control systems
  - 12% of the exam is participating in the administration and management of pharmacy practice

- Example: University of Kentucky Hospital
  - Grade 03—Pharmacy Technician I
    - High school diploma
    - General chemistry knowledge
    - Basic algebra knowledge
    - Proficient reading/writing
    - One year work experience (preferably in related field) OR enrolled in College as first- or second-year pharmacy student
  - Grade 05—Pharmacy Technician III
    - High school diploma
    - General chemistry knowledge
    - Basic algebra knowledge
    - Proficient reading/writing
    - Proficient in all job functions as described in job description
    - Current National Pharmacy Technician Certification
    - 24 months of previous pharmacy experience OR enrolled in College of Pharmacy as fourth-year student OR has successfully completed an ASHP accredited (or comparable) pharmacy technician training program and is nationally certified as a pharmacy technician in 12 months

- Grade 07—Pharmacy Lead Technician
  - High school diploma
  - General chemistry knowledge
  - Basic algebra knowledge
  - Proficient reading/writing
  - Proficient in all job functions as described in job description
  - Current National Pharmacy Technician Certification
  - 36 months of previous pharmacy experience
  - Supervisory experience preferred, but not required OR has successfully completed an ASHP accredited (or comparable) pharmacy technician training program and is nationally certified as a pharmacy technician in 12 months

#### • Examples of technician tasks at different levels

##### Tech 1

- This entry level technician will assist the Pharmacist in medication distribution functions, compounding, and other duties to enhance hospital-wide patient care.

##### Tech 2

- Same as above, PLUS
- Participates in the training of new-hire Pharmacy Technician I
- Nationally certified
- IV compounding

##### Tech 3

- Same as above, PLUS
- Responsibility for specific area or workflow
- Assists in the preparation of presentations for committees
- Performs quality assurance assignments as directed

## Other promotion strategies

- Technicians w/ IPPE students
- Promoting growth/involvement
- Cross training opportunities

## What's next in a hospital technician career ?

## Expansion of Tech Careers

- Employment of pharmacy technicians is expected to increase by 32 percent from 2010 to 2020
- Growing much faster than the average for all occupation

## Possible changes

- Required PTCB certification
- Tech to tech check
- More clinical roles – clinical extenders

## Required certification

- Emily's Law
  - 2006
    - Emily Jerry was 18 months old when she was diagnosed with a curable form of cancer. She went through many rounds of chemo and surgeries that were successful. During her final round of chemo, a technician prepared a base solution of 23.4% saline instead of the normal 0.9% saline solution. The error was not caught by the technician or the pharmacist and Emily received the solution. As a result of this error, Emily fell into a coma and passed away three days later, shortly after her second birthday.

- 2009

- As a result of this error, Ohio developed Emily's Law:
  - "Only pharmacists, pharmacy interns, or pharmacy technicians who are working in a pharmacy may compound drugs, package or label drugs, or prepare intravenous drugs."
  - Parameters for pharmacy technicians covered by this law:
    - Individual who is at least 18 years of age
    - Received a high school diploma or its equivalent
    - Completed a competency examination approved by the Ohio State Board of Pharmacy (passing either the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board or the Institute for Certification of Pharmacy Technicians examination)
    - Fulfilled the requirement of a criminal background check revealing no prior felonies

## Tech-Check-Tech

- TCT is the checking of a technician's order filling accuracy by another technician rather than a pharmacist
  - This allows specially trained pharmacy technicians to perform final verification on refill medications
- Tech-Check-Tech (TCT) is a program that 16 states are currently implementing and other states may employ in the near future

- With the exception of North Dakota, all of the TCT programs in the states listed are in institutional settings only
- A main reason that TCT has been limited to institutional settings is because "an allowable setting must have a licensed health professional to provide additional, independent verification before medication administration"

- Institutional practices using TCT have layers of safety built in that reduce the possibility of dispensing errors
  - Example: In hospitals, product barcodes are scanned while gathering the medication, as well as before placing it into the ADS
- TCT reduces the need for pharmacists to perform technical functions, allowing their time to be focused on direct patient care and clinical services

- Technicians who are allowed to do the final check must complete education or specialized training that varies from state-to-state

Some training/education requirements for TCT:

- Technicians who meet a minimum required experience in a unit-dosed distribution system can become “tech-checkers” by completing educational and practical training modules, followed by a confirmation period
- Technicians must achieve a minimum accuracy rate before they are permitted to independently perform final verification
- TCT programs must have quality assurance programs established.

## Accuracy of technician vs pharmacist

- Both display high level of accuracy in dispense verification and error detection
- Limits to studies include time frame, severity of errors or possibility of honeymoon phase for technicians

## Use of technician in clinical pharmacy

- Medication reconciliation
- Discharge medication counseling
- Patient interview
- Order entry clean up
- Clinical data collection
- Drug use policy enforcement

## Conclusion

- History of technician career
- Hiring and retaining good technician
- Certification and Accredited programs
- Upcoming possible changes in tech career