

# The Status of Technician Education and Training in Wisconsin

A review of offerings by technical colleges, home-based learning schools, and employers

This White Paper was presented to the Wisconsin Pharmacy Forum on November 11, 2003.

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The Council on Credentialing in Pharmacy (CCP) has requested that the American Council on Pharmaceutical Education (ACPE) initiate a profession-wide dialog concerning the development of national standards and an accreditation process for pharmacy technician education and training. Knowledge of current technician education and training in Wisconsin is helpful for participation in this dialog. This paper will describe, as of October 2003, education programs offered by technical colleges and home-based learning schools, and training programs offered by employers.

## BACKGROUND

Approximately 4,600 pharmacy technicians currently work in Wisconsin,<sup>1</sup> and this number is projected to rise to approximately 5,400 by the year 2010.<sup>2</sup> Since 1995, when the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB) exam was first offered, 2,645 technicians in Wisconsin have taken the PTCB exam and 2,339 have passed.<sup>3</sup> Table 1 shows the number of technicians taking and passing the PTCB exam by year. After passing the PTCB exam, technicians are designated Certified Pharmacy Technicians (CPhTs). To maintain CPhT status, technicians must complete continuing education (CE) every two years.<sup>4</sup> According to the PTCB, 2,321 CPhTs are currently working in Wisconsin.<sup>5</sup> Based on graduation rates from Wisconsin technical colleges, most of the pharmacy technicians in Wisconsin have not completed formalized education programs.

To compare Wisconsin to the nation, 207,000 pharmacy technicians worked in the United States in 2001.<sup>6</sup> Since 1995, 183,001 technicians have taken the PTCB

exam and 146,117 have passed.<sup>5</sup> Table 2 shows the number of technicians nationwide taking and passing the PTCB exam by year. According to the PTCB, 124,656 CPhTs are currently working in the United States.<sup>5</sup> The number of technicians nationwide who have completed formalized education programs is unknown.

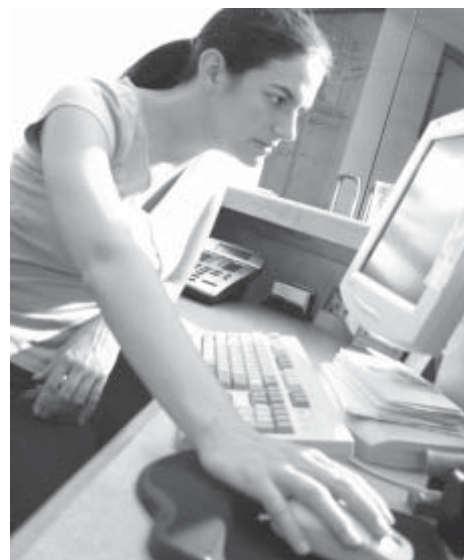
## PHARMACY TECHNICIAN EDUCATION PROGRAMS

### Technical colleges

Two Wisconsin technical colleges, Lakeshore Technical College (LTC) and Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC-Milwaukee), currently offer pharmacy technician programs. Madison Area Technical College (MATC-Madison) offered a program between 1990 and May 2003. The two current programs are described below. Statewide curriculum meetings will be held this year to standardize technical college pharmacy technician programs so that the same course numbers at different schools correspond to similar course content. Curricula of the two programs are fairly similar.

### Lakeshore Technical College<sup>7, 8</sup>

LTC, located in Cleveland, Wisconsin, offers a 2-semester, 36-credit pharmacy



Several online home-study programs are now available for pharmacy technicians seeking education and training.

technician program that covers both institutional and community pharmacy practice. This program is televised live to 11 other technical college districts in 14 cities. The live televised program is interactive and students may participate either at LTC or at any campus where the program is televised. Figure 1 shows the technical college districts that participate in the LTC program. Table 3 shows the curriculum, which may be under revision. LTC is also piloting an additional curricu-

TABLE 1. PTCB EXAM STATISTICS

Exam Date	# taking exam	# passing exam	% passing
1995 – 1999 exams	1,302	1,195	92%
2000 exams	547	445	81%
Mar 10, 2001	163	144	88%
Jul 14, 2001	179	156	87%
Nov 10, 2001	149	125	84%
Mar 16, 2002	112	101	90%
Jul 27, 2002	193	173	90%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,645</b>	<b>2,339</b>	<b>88%</b>

From Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin Web site: [www.pswi.org/technician/statistics.htm](http://www.pswi.org/technician/statistics.htm)

lum more focused on community practice. The cost of each credit for Wisconsin residents is \$70; total program tuition and fees is \$3,275. Financial aid is available.

A survey of the 22 students who graduated in 2001 yielded the following results: of the 16 graduates who responded, 14 were working as pharmacy technicians and two were unavailable for employment. Currently, 54 students are enrolled in the program and LTC is considering raising enrollment to 84 students. All students are planning on taking the PTCB exam. LTC is unaware of any students failing the exam.

#### Milwaukee Area Technical College<sup>9, 10, 11</sup>

MATC-Milwaukee offers a 2-semester, 28-credit program that serves the greater-Milwaukee area. The program is offered primarily on campus, although the school is considering offering more courses on-line if demand develops. Table 4 shows the curriculum, which may be under revision. The current 2-semester program covers both community and institutional practice. The cost of each credit for Wisconsin residents is \$76.13; the total program tuition and fees is \$2769.77.

The program admits up to 20 new students and four readmitted students each year. The number of students admitted and graduating in the last five years is as follows: 1999 – 36 admitted, 22 graduating; 2000 – 33 admitted, 13 graduating; 2001 – 22 admitted, 8 graduating, 2002 – 30 admitted, 7 graduating; 2003 – 30 admitted, 14 graduating. The completion rate has been low; however, MATC-Milwaukee is addressing this issue by ensuring that students entering the program are better prepared for the program.

While not all students take the PTCB exam, all graduates who have taken the exam have passed. A number of students have also taken the PTCB exam after completing just the first semester of the program. All but two graduates are employed as pharmacy technicians; one graduate continued on to graduate school, and one graduate pursued employment as a medical assistant.

In addition to the traditional pharmacy technician program, MATC-Milwaukee has also done several contract programs for state W2 agencies. These contract programs vary in length and focus on community pharmacy.

**TABLE 2. NATIONAL PTCB EXAM STATISTICS**

Exam Date	# taking exam	# passing exam	% passing
1995 – 1999 exams	8,101	6,206	77%
Mar 25, 2000	12,317	10,006	81%
Jul 22, 2000	12,941	9,520	74%
Nov 18, 2000	8,442	6,116	72%
Mar 10, 2001	12,057	9,799	81%
Jul 14, 2001	10,608	8,354	79%
Nov 10, 2001	8,874	7,072	80%
Mar 16, 2002	13,399	10,681	80%
Jul 27, 2002	11,521	9,164	80%
Nov 16, 2002	12,147	9,506	78%
Mar 29, 2003	14,212	11,720	82%
Jul 26, 2003	58,382	47,973	82%
<b>Total</b>	<b>183,001</b>	<b>146,117</b>	<b>80%</b>

From PTCB Web site: [www.ptcb.org](http://www.ptcb.org)

**TABLE 3. LTC CURRICULUM**

Course #	Course Title	Hours/Week	Credits
<b>SEMESTER I (18 credits)</b>			
103-130	Internet/E-mail	2	1
106-100	Keyboarding	2	1
536-110	Pharmaceutical Calculations	2	2
536-112	Pharmacy Business Applications	3	3
536-120	Fundamentals of Reading Prescriptions	2	2
536-134	Managing Pharmacy Benefits	1	1
536-138	Pharmacy Community Clinical	6	2
801-196	Oral/Interpersonal Communications	3	3
806-105	Medical Terminology	3	3
<b>SEMESTER II (18 credits)</b>			
103-109	Pharmacy Word 2002 Introduction	4	2
536-115	Pharmacy Law	2	2
536-122	Pharmacology	2	2
536-124	Pharmacy Drug Distribution Systems	3	2
536-126	Pharmacy Parenteral Admixtures	5	4
536-140	Pharmacy Hospital Clinical	9	3
809-198	Introduction to Psychology	3	3

From Lakeshore Technical College Web site: [www.gotolc.com](http://www.gotolc.com)

## Technician Response to the ACPE White Paper

by Nancy Maliborski, President, PSW Technician Section

The first time most of our technician membership had heard of the "white paper" was at our breakfast at the 2003 PSW Spring Educational Conference in Madison. The "white paper" takes into account the possible development of national standards and an accreditation process for pharmacy technician education and training.

The entire process is expected to take about three years. In 2003, which was year one, the ACPE (American Council on Pharmaceutical Education) solicited written comments from pharmacy organizations and individuals to be analyzed and summarized. A series of open hearings was also held at national pharmacy conferences. The submission deadline for comments was October 31, 2003 but was pushed back to December 31, 2003.

During 2004 (year two), the ACPE will take the feedback from the previous year and develop and publish a draft of competency-based standards for pharmacy technician education and training. Pharmacy organizations and individuals will then be solicited to give written comments on the draft. Again, open meetings will be held. A re-draft of the standards will be made based on the feedback received.

During 2005 (year three), ACPE will invite a final review of the revised standards by the professional organizations. The standards will be adopted and the process to accredit pharmacy education and training programs will be initiated. The end result will be the development of "distinctive standards" for continuing education providers that wish to conduct accredited programs for pharmacy technicians.

The Wisconsin Pharmacy Forum drafted Wisconsin's reply to ACPE's invitation. The forum consisted of representatives from the UW School of Pharmacy, the Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin, and the Pharmacy Examining Board. The Technician Section Board of Directors' reply was included in the final comments by PSW.

The invitation to respond consisted of six questions. Question one addressed the current definition of a pharmacy technician. Our reply stated that the prescribed definition is adequate for now, but it may change as the role of the technician changes. Perhaps one day the technician will be delegated responsibilities that will necessitate licensure. The definition will need to be addressed again at that time.

Question two pertained to the levels of pharmacy support personnel. Our reply defined five practice sites: institutional, community, long-term care, managed care, and manufacturer. Role or employment responsibilities included data entry, cart fill, IV tech, narcotic tech, production packaging, and inventory control purchaser.

Question five considered training. We commented that training could occur through on-the-job programs, vocational education, or home study (online or written education programs). There must be some form of accountability for this training, like a standardized exam. As one ascends the responsibility or role levels, a technician must pass one exam or prove competency before taking the next exam (step process).

The final question tackled the quality assurance of pharmacy technician education and training. In order to provide for quality assurance, there must be a recognized, central body that establishes the requirements necessary for recognition of knowledge (diploma) and application of knowledge (certification). Quality can only be measured if every employer, technical college or educational resource has standard guidelines to establish their educational programming. Standardization in education should also allow the technician to move freely among employers and give employers the assurance that the technician will perform at a minimum level of competency without excessive retraining.

As you can see, that was quite a response! I'm looking forward to seeing the draft that will be distributed for written comments this year.

This is what the Technician Board has had at the forefront of its goals since the inception of the PSW Technician Section: to raise the perception of the pharmacy technician as a professional. Technicians are already assuming greater responsibilities, and the time has come to mandate a system of checks and balances to ensure the care and safety of our patients. ●

### **Home-Study Programs**

Several home-study programs are available online, including Rx Insider, Rx Success, Rx Tech School, Professional Career Development Institute (PCDI) Homestudy, and Thomson Education Direct. Although all of these programs are available online, online access is not required for PCDI or Thomson Education Direct.

Because these programs are available online and not necessarily affiliated with a college or university, assessing the reputation and quality of these programs is essential but often difficult.

Table 5 compares characteristics of each program. Tables 6 through 9 list program curricula.

In addition to online education programs, numerous review courses for the PTCB exam are also available online. When looking online for an education program, differentiating between review courses and education programs is important.

#### **RxInsider<sup>12</sup>**

While being marketed as a technician training program, the extremely low cost and the extremely low time requirement of "a few hours" indicate that this program is not a full training program.

#### **Rx Success<sup>13</sup>**

The Rx Success program is provided by Salt & Light Enterprises. The program consists of evening online instruction sessions, online and textbook readings, homework assignments, quizzes, and exams. The program's Web site does not provide information about the instructors, and the program is not affiliated with a school of pharmacy. However, the curriculum appears appropriate. Students can contact instructors by phone or e-mail.

This program includes a free PTCB exam review course. The review course can also be purchased separately by students not participating in the education program.

#### **Rx Tech School<sup>14</sup>**

This program consists of regularly scheduled online instruction sessions. The instructors are also faculty members at Shenandoah University School of Pharmacy, an ACPE accredited school of pharmacy. Two of the instructors have

BS Pharmacy degrees, and one instructor has a BS Biological Sciences degree. Students can contact instructors through on-line chat, online discussion boards, and e-mail.

Rx Tech School also offers a separate review course for the PTCB exam.

#### PCDI<sup>15</sup>

This program consists of printed lesson plans and assignments that can be completed without Internet access. The curriculum appears appropriate. The instructors are pharmacists, but the program is not affiliated with a school of pharmacy. Students can contact instructors by phone or e-mail.

#### Thomson Education Direct<sup>16</sup>

This program consists of printed lesson plans and assignments that can be completed without Internet access. The program's Web site does not provide information about the instructors, and the program is not affiliated with a school of pharmacy. The curriculum is not available on the program's Web site. Students can contact instructors by phone, e-mail, or mail.

### TECHNICIAN TRAINING BY EMPLOYERS

We interviewed nine pharmacies to investigate the types of technician training methods being used by employers. Practice settings include independent community, retail chain, hospital, and long-term care. We found that training methods

vary widely, ranging from informal to highly structured formats. Below is a description of our findings. Pharmacy names are withheld for confidentiality.

#### Independent community pharmacies

##### Pharmacy A

Pharmacy A is a small independent community practice. New technicians are given their own technician training manuals, which they keep throughout their employment. Technicians can update and add notes to their manuals as needed. Use of the manuals facilitates the training process and helps ensure that key competencies are met. Topics covered include filling prescriptions, using pharmacy dispensing software, basic pharmacy math, basic pharmacy law, community-based residency facility (CBRF) rules and regulations, and blister packaging. Training is primarily provided by experienced technicians with some pharmacist participation. New technicians first learn the filling process. When they are comfortable with the filling process, they learn how to use the pharmacy dispensing software. Different levels of training, such as inventory man-

agement and insurance/billing management become available as technicians gain experience.

Pharmacy A encourages technicians to become certified by offering tutoring. No technicians at Pharmacy A have become certified yet.

##### Pharmacy B

Pharmacy B is a large independent community practice. Training begins at the central office, where new technicians review company policy and receive pharmacy dispensing software training. The new technicians then shadow designated technicians at up to three different pharmacy locations. All employees assist in training, but the technicians designated to participate in shadowing are chosen based on communication skills and job-related skills. This initial training (central office, shadowing) lasts approximately two weeks. On-the-job training then continues as technicians begin working in the pharmacy. For some key areas, checklists and quizzes are used to facilitate the training process.

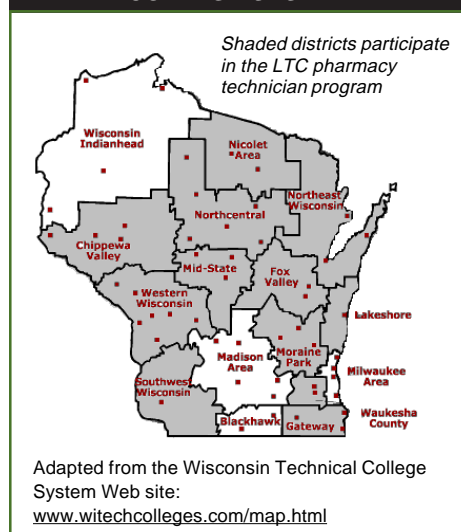
Several different levels of training are available as technicians gain experience.

TABLE 4. MATC-MILWAUKEE CURRICULUM

Course #	Course Title	Hours/Week	Credits
<b>SEMESTER I (15 credits)</b>			
ENG 151	Communication Skills 1	3	3
NURSD 150 OR MLABT 150 +	Medical Terminology Applied OR Medical Terminology Applied +		
OFTECH 103	Keyboard and Keypad	3	3
PHARMT 300	Orientation to Pharmacy	2	1
PHARMT 302	Pharmaceutical Calculations	4	3
PHARMT 303	Introduction to Drug Classification	4	2
PHARMT 305	Intro to Pharmacy Operating Systems	2	1
PHARMT 306	Pharmacy Clinical Experience	8	1
PHARMT 395	Pharmacy Customer Relations	2	1
<b>Support Courses (12 credits)</b>			
PHARMT 310	Institutional Pharmacy Practice	3	2
PHARMT 311	Orientation to Sterile Solutions	4	2
PHARMT 312	Pharmacy Operations Laboratory	6	3
PHARMT 314	Pharmacy Clinical Experience II	8	2
PHARMT 316	Applied Pharmaceutical Calculations	2	1
PSYCH 199	Psychology of Human Relations	3	3

From Milwaukee Area Technical College Web site: [www.matc.edu](http://www.matc.edu)

FIGURE 1. WISCONSIN TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM



**TABLE 5. PHARMACY TECHNICIAN PROGRAMS AVAILABLE ONLINE**

	Cost	Time	Internet access	Affiliated w/ university?	Member of BBB? <sup>a</sup>
<b>Rx Insider</b> www.rxinsider.com	\$39	“a few hours”	Required	No	No
<b>Rx Success</b> www.rxtechsuccess.com/fastrack.htm	\$1,599	20 weeks	Optional	No	Yes
<b>Rx Tech School</b> www.rxtechschoo.com	\$1,499	18 weeks	Required	Yes <sup>b</sup>	No
<b>Professional Career Development Institute</b> www.pcdi-homestudy.com/courses/pt/	\$589	self-paced within 2 yrs	Optional	No	Yes
<b>Thomson Education Direct</b> www.educationdirect.com/pharmacy/index.html		self-paced within 2 yrs	Optional	No	Yes

a. Better Business Bureau reports available at www.bbb.org.

- Rx Success – 1 complaint (resolved) since 2002.

- PCDI – 192 complaints over last 36 months (all PCDI programs), good faith effort made to resolve all.

- Thomson Education Direct – Complaints mostly related to billing and refunds; company responded to all.

b. Rx Tech School is affiliated with Shenandoah School of Pharmacy in Winchester, Virginia

Levels available include Tech I, Tech II, Tech III, and Tech IV (CPhT). Pharmacy B encourages technicians to become certified by providing pay incentives, providing study materials, and covering exam costs. Pharmacy B has found that experienced technicians who become certified are often able to perform additional duties.

**Retail chain pharmacies**

**Pharmacy C**

Pharmacy C is a large chain pharmacy. Pharmacy C currently uses a fairly informal training program that may vary among pharmacy locations; however, Pharmacy C is currently in the process of developing and implementing a more formalized training program. Currently, new technicians are trained through on-the-job training at the specific site where they will be working. Lesson plans or checklists may be used at different sites, but the use of these training aids has not been formalized. Training lasts approximately six months, and different levels of training are not currently available.

The new training program in development consists of both didactic learning and on-the-job training. The didactic portion consists of computer-based training and discussions. Information covered is from particular chapters of the NACDS technician training manual and includes reading prescriptions, filling prescriptions, pharmacy math, pharmacy law, and

confidentiality. Discussions complement and reinforce this material. New technicians spend half of each week in the didactic portion and the other half in on-the-job training. This new training program is expected to last 60 days.

**Pharmacy D**

Pharmacy D is a large chain retail pharmacy. Training begins in the training room with computer-based didactic training. The computer-based training includes 13 modules that cover various topics, including using the dispensing software, filling prescriptions, pharmacy math, customer service, and technician roles and responsibilities. Training then continues in the pharmacy. On-the-job training methods may vary among different sites but is generally informal.

Different technician levels available include Tech, Senior Tech, and Senior Certified Tech. Pharmacy D encourages technicians to become certified by pro-

viding pay incentives and covering exam costs. Pharmacy D has found that technicians who are certified are often able to assume additional duties and responsibilities, but job performance rather than certification status is key to assigning those additional duties and responsibilities.

**Pharmacy E**

Pharmacy E is a large chain retail pharmacy. Training begins with five days of classroom training at a regional training site. Topics covered include policies and procedures, reading prescriptions, using the dispensing software, filling prescriptions, basic pharmacy math, and basic pharmacy law. This training was previously provided by a pharmacist but is now provided by a highly experienced technician. The new technicians are then given checklists to complete over the next five days to ensure that key competencies are learned. Job areas covered on the checklists include working in the

**TABLE 6. RX INSIDER CURRICULUM**

Section	Topic
1	General Pharmacy Information – 12 pages of information
2	Pharmacy Abbreviations (Sig Codes) – over 50 abbreviations
3	Brand – Generic Drug Name Association – over 55 brand/generic names
4	Prescriber Handwriting Recognition – over 60 samples of prescribers' handwriting
5	Basic Self-Assessment Quiz – 24 questions (can be taken as often as needed)

From Rx Insider Web site: www.rxinsider.com

**TABLE 7. RX SUCCESS CURRICULUM.**

Module I	Module II	Module III
1. Pharmacology I	1. Pharmacology II	1. Pharmacology III
2. Anatomy/Physiology I	2. Anatomy/Physiology II	2. Anatomy/Physiology III
3. Medical Terminology I	3. Medical Terminology II	3. Medical Terminology III
4. Law/Ethics	4. Pharmacy Calculations	4. Introduction to computers and automated dispensing systems
5. Inventory Management	5. OTCs	5. Clerical Duties
6. Pharmacy practice	6. Dosage Forms / Compounding	6. Customer Service

From Rx Success Web site: [www.rxtechsuccess.com](http://www.rxtechsuccess.com)

drop-off window, entering prescriptions, filling prescriptions, and working at the cash register. The new technicians complete the checklists while working with the technicians that are working in each area.

Different technician levels available include Tech, Certified Tech, and Tech Specialist. Certified technicians must pass both internal exams and the PTCB exams. Pharmacy E offers training sessions for the PTCB exam and covers exam costs for technicians who pass the PTCB exam. Tech Specialists must pass additional internal exams and are then given a supervisory role. Responsibilities of Tech Specialists include inventory management and technician scheduling.

**Hospital pharmacies**

**Pharmacy F**

Pharmacy F is a large hospital pharmacy. Pharmacy F uses a teaching manual that contains hospital information and policies, job descriptions and responsibilities, and competency assessment tools that are used during annual reviews. Information in the teaching manual is reviewed with new technicians, and dispensing software

training is provided. Checklists are used for certain areas such as working in the IV room and using PIXIS. Both pharmacists and experienced technicians participate in the training process.

Pharmacy F encourages technicians to become certified by offering review sessions and covering exam costs. Pharmacy F has found that CPhTs are sometimes, but not universally, able to perform additional duties.

**Pharmacy G**

Pharmacy G is a large hospital pharmacy. New technicians are given reading material, copies of hospital policies and procedures, and worksheets to complete. Training begins with one week of classroom training and then continues for six weeks in the pharmacy, where the new technicians shadow and work one-on-one with experienced technicians. Training checklists are used to facilitate training and set expectations for the new technician. At the end of training, the technician is observed and competency is assessed. Different areas of training are not available for decentralized technicians; all

decentralized technicians perform the same duties. For technicians working in the central pharmacy, many different training areas are available, including unit dose, cart fills, repackaging, sterile products, and narcotics. Centralized technicians generally have a primary area and a secondary area but may be trained in several different areas.

Pharmacy G does not provide incentives for technicians to become certified. Additional duties and responsibilities are not currently assigned to technicians who become certified.

**Long term care pharmacies**

**Pharmacy H**

Pharmacy H is a relatively small long-term care pharmacy that serves several facilities. Pharmacy H uses a fairly informal training process in which new technicians shadow an experienced technician for approximately two days. On the next day, they are given the same type of work to perform themselves and are encouraged to ask a pharmacist or other technicians about any questions that arise. Each time a new technician moves to a differ-

**TABLE 8. RX TECH SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

Section	Topic
1	Discussing the governance and ethics of pharmacy practice and the role of pharmacy technicians
2	Assisting the pharmacist in serving patients
3	Assessing rxs or medication orders for completeness, authenticity, legality, and reimbursement eligibility
4	Obtaining medications or devices from inventory measuring, counting, or calculating finished dosage forms
5	Compounding a prescription or medication order
6	Compounding medications for dispensing; preparing sterile products
7	Providing medication to the patient / patient's representative
8	Determining charges and obtaining reimbursement for services
9	Maintaining medication and inventory control systems
10	Participating in the administration and management of pharmacy practice

From Rx Tech School Web site: [www.rxtechschooll.com](http://www.rxtechschooll.com)

**TABLE 9. PCDI CURRICULUM**

Section	Topic	Section	Topic
1	pharmacy technician's role	11	antivirals, antifungals, antihistamines, antitussives, decongestants
2	pharmacy terminology	12	anesthetics, analgesics, and narcotics
3	drugs, dosage forms, and delivery systems	13	drugs for CNS disorders
4	drug administration	14	respiratory and cardiovascular drugs
5	pharmaceutical measurements	15	gastrointestinal and urinary system drugs
6	dispensing, billing, and managing inventory	16	muscle relaxants, analgesics, and hormones
7	compounding drugs; human relations skills	17	topicals, ophthalmics, and otics
8	hospital and institutional pharmacy practice	18	recombinant drugs, chemotherapy, and more
9	the science of pharmacology	19	pharmacy math, part I
10	antibiotics	20	pharmacy math, part II

From PCDI Web site: [www.pcdi-homestudy.com](http://www.pcdi-homestudy.com)

ent work area, this process is repeated. Different work areas include daily order fills, monthly cycle fills, multidose filling, and blister packaging. As technicians gain experience, they receive cross-training in several different areas.

Pharmacy H currently does not specifically encourage technicians to become certified. Pharmacy H has hired technicians that have completed education programs at technical colleges and has found these technicians to be highly motivated and career-oriented.

#### Pharmacy I

Pharmacy I is a long-term care pharmacy that is part of a large network of hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, and clinics. Training begins with a one-day orientation to the skilled nursing facility and a three hour orientation to the pharmacy department. These orientations include general facility and department information, policies and procedures, and introductions to other staff. In the pharmacy, new technicians meet with the pharmacy supervisor and are given a technician training manual that describes core technician duties. They are also given a job description that describes key competencies. Job descriptions vary depending on the job area for which the technicians are hired. Different job areas include prescription entry, prescription filling, billing, delivery, and non-drug data entry (generation of medical records for the skilled nursing facilities). After meeting with the pharmacy supervisor, the new technicians are each paired with a lead technician who serves as a mentor. This mentoring process may last one or two

weeks, depending on the progress of the new technician. At the end of training, technicians are required to take a quiz ensuring that key competencies are met.

Pharmacy I currently has no incentives for technicians to become certified but sees this as an area in which they could improve. Pharmacy I would encourage any technician interested in becoming certified.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Below is a summary of our findings on the status of technician education and training programs in Wisconsin.

- Two Wisconsin technical colleges, Lakeshore Technical College and Milwaukee Area Technical College currently offer technician education programs. Through these two programs, most of the state has access to a technical college pharmacy technician program. The curricula of these two programs appear fairly standardized.
- Several home-study courses are available online. The curricula of these programs may vary, and quality may be difficult to assess.
- Training methods used by employers vary widely, ranging from very informal to highly structured.
- Technicians who become certified are sometimes but not universally able to accept additional duties and responsibilities.

Knowledge regarding the status of technician education and training is key to participation in the current national debate regarding standards and accreditation of technician education and training programs. ●

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