

PSW Tech Section: Moving Toward Mandatory Certification?

Pharmacy technicians seek greater recognition for their contributions to patient care

by Lynn Dittman, RPh

Some years ago, technicians across America began a process to formalize their evolving role as pharmacy professionals. Many technicians had been trained on the job with no formal training beyond a high school diploma. Several technicians I worked with were medical or nursing students. Still others worked as technicians while pursuing a college degree and ultimately left to pursue other careers. Yet, many work their entire careers as technicians and are taking steps to be recognized via the certification process that allows a distinction within technician ranks.

I am serving as one of two liaisons from the PSW Board of Directors to the Technician Section Board. Susan Kleppin is the other liaison. The Technician Section Board is an outstanding group of dedicated pharmacy professionals chaired this year by Annette Eternick. Their enthusiasm and conviction is inspiring. This Board has a vision for the pharmacy technicians of Wisconsin. They desire further recognition via registration or mandatory certification via the Pharmacy Examining Board. Many other states have already taken this step. Six states license technicians, 30 states require registration, and eight others mandate certification.

Recognizing that their vision requires a road map, the Technician Section created a document: *2005 Goals and Objectives, a Work in Progress*. "A Work in Progress" indicates that the document will change and develop as the profession moves ahead, and the roles of the pharmacy technician adapt to the needs of the profession. The objectives are described as a wish list for the Section and will be addressed given the resources of the Section and PSW, as well as the timing, opportunity, and practicality of each concept.

Here are some excerpts from their document:

1. Promote professionalism among members and non-members. Look for common and collaborative opportunities with the Wisconsin technical colleges who train pharmacy technicians.
2. Support certification for all technicians—develop a road map for mandatory certification.
3. Establish a relationship with the Pharmacy Examining Board (PEB)—work with the PEB to add registration/mandatory certification of technicians to rules/statutes.

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4. Improve the quality and content of educational programs offered. Promote increased pharmacist involvement in the continuing education of technicians at their place of work.
5. Work to achieve appropriate compensation for responsibilities performed in the workplace.

In an exciting move, *JPSW* is offering within this issue its first article for CE credit aimed at technicians. Editor Curt Johnson enthusiastically supports this initiative. PTCB-certified technicians are required to complete 20 hours of continuing education every two years in order to maintain their certification. Many are challenged to meet this requirement. Representatives from Lakeshore Technical College and Milwaukee Area Technical College attended a recent Technician Section meeting. Many areas of collaboration were identified and a firm relationship has been established. The Board is also prepar-

ing a White Paper in support of registration or mandatory certification. These are just a few examples of steps taken toward accomplishing the Section goals.

The Section has developed a set of lofty goals; and this is a committed group of professionals. Improving technician professionalism and skill sets is in the best interest of pharmacy practice in Wisconsin. The desires of the Technician Section members and the goals of PSW are tightly intertwined and aligned. Technicians are integral to our professional success. Expanded areas of responsibility create capacity for pharmacists to advance clinical

programs and services. Technicians may also contribute directly to a specialty practice (e.g. blood glucose meter education). Each individual pharmacist or pharmacy practice can engage pharmacy technicians in developing plans to further their practice.

Continue to seek opportunities for skilled technician colleagues in support of clinical practice advancement. Promote technician continuing education and ongoing learning activities by paying for program registration, scheduling time for live or on-line CE programs, and sharing appropriate learning activities with all pharmacy staff. I challenge each of my pharmacist colleagues to see what can be done at your practice site to further the development of our technician colleagues. ●

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