



Position Statement

Pharmacy Technician Education, Training, and Certification

Terminology:

The American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP) supports the use of the term “pharmacy technician” only for those persons in a pharmacy practice setting who:

- are authorized by both state regulation and employment status to engage in one or more steps in the process of fulfillment of a prescription or medication order;
- have successfully completed an education and training program that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting body; and
- are certified by the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB).

Education & Training:

ACCP supports the accreditation process for pharmacy technician education and training programs administered by the Commission on Credentialing of the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP). Further, ACCP supports a planned, timely transition for the responsibility and process of accreditation of pharmacy technician education and training programs from ASHP to the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education.

ACCP supports the use and ongoing refinement of a nationally recognized and standardized model curriculum for all new pharmacy technicians that provides core knowledge, skills, and attitudes delivered through a process of both didactic instruction and practice-based learning experiences.

ACCP supports an expanded role for colleges and schools of pharmacy in the development, standardization, and validation of pharmacy technician education and training programs and encourages their active involvement in facilitating team-based learning opportunities for student pharmacists and student pharmacy technicians.

Certification:

ACCP supports the certification program of the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board and urges its adoption as a required component of the process of credentialing of pharmacy technicians by state and federal regulatory bodies.

Practice Activities:

ACCP supports changes in pharmacy practice regulations that would authorize a system by which pharmacy technicians may engage in a “technician-check-technician” process for prescription/medication order fulfillment. This process must be performed in an integrated fashion with the provision of clinical services, patient education, and patient and health care provider consultation activities by pharmacists that promote the effective and safe use of the medication being dispensed.

ACCP supports limiting persons who are authorized to be involved in the process of fulfillment of prescription or medication orders (or other appropriate medication-related patient care activities) to personnel who are pharmacists, student pharmacists engaged in introductory and advanced practice experiences of their professional degree program, pharmacy technicians, or student pharmacy technicians.

Licensure and Registration:

ACCP supports the public health and safety role of state boards of pharmacy and encourages the implementation of enhanced, nationally uniform registration and/or licensure procedures for pharmacy technicians that are based on and consistent with the education, training, and certification principles outlined in this position statement.

**Adopted by the Board of Regents of the
American College of Clinical Pharmacy**

August 10, 2007

Background:

The issues surrounding the roles, responsibilities, education, training, and regulation of pharmacy technicians – even what to call this type of pharmacy “worker” -- have challenged the pharmacy profession for decades.¹ Despite several recent efforts to generate consensus (1988 ASHP Invitational Conference, 1992 APhA Stepping Stone Conference, 2003 Council on Credentialing in Pharmacy/ACPE Open Hearings) and periodic external stimuli (the 2000 Institute of Medicine report “To Err is Human” and television exposes such as the April, 2007 ABC News “20/20” investigative report), a stubborn inertia continues to exist at the present time. Pharmacy, essentially alone among the health professions, has failed to clearly articulate the necessary educational, credentialing, and scope of practice parameters that society can expect from the corps of technical personnel that function within the profession’s various practice settings.

In its 2000 “white paper” on manpower needs² ACCP noted the “uneven preparation” of pharmacy technicians and called for the “recruitment and utilization of well-trained, nationally-certified pharmacy technicians who can be deployed in appropriate dispensing roles, under pharmacist supervision.” Since that time, changes in professional education (Pharm.D. as the sole professional degree) and practice opportunities (JCPP 2015 Vision for Pharmacy Practice³, medication therapy management services within Medicare Part D) have served to further advance the pharmacist’s capabilities and involvement in patient care activities while still retaining overall accountability (and usually specific task responsibilities) for prescription order processing and fulfillment in most practice models.

Unfortunately, a similar evolution in the education, training, scope of practice, job responsibilities, and career opportunities has not occurred for pharmacy technicians during that same period. Without substantial reformation of the balance of responsibilities, accountabilities, tasks, and activities within the current and future model of pharmacy practice, neither pharmacists nor pharmacy technicians will be able to effectively and safely meet the full range of medication use and safety needs of the public they serve. In essence, without an expanded and professionally recognized and standardized role for pharmacy technicians, the comprehensive delivery and impact of clinical pharmacy services is extremely unlikely to be achieved in most pharmacy practice settings.

In 2002, a jointly developed and published paper⁴ provided what remains the most complete and accurate assessment of the current state of education, training, and regulation of pharmacy technicians. The paper calls for pharmacy’s leadership to engage in specific discussions on pharmacy technicians in five key areas: (1) vision, (2) roles, responsibilities and competencies, (3) education and training, (4) credentialing and

¹ Anon. Pharmacists for the future: the report of the study commission on pharmacy. Ann Arbor: Health Administration Press, 1975.

² Maddux, MS, Dong, BJ, et.al., A vision of pharmacy’s future roles, responsibilities, and manpower needs in the United State. *Pharmacotherapy* 2000;20(8):991-1022.

³ Anon. JCPP Vision Statement for Pharmacy Practice. Various publications 2005.

⁴ Council on Credentialing in Pharmacy. White paper on pharmacy technicians 2002: needed changes can no longer wait. *Am.J.Health-Syst Pharm* 2002;60:37-51.

accreditation, and (5) regulation. Five years have passed with essentially no organized effort within the profession to advance its thinking and action in this important area.

Despite this lack of professional dialogue and consensus on the education, training, and scope of practice vision for pharmacy technicians, tremendous growth has in fact occurred in the past five years in the number of technicians certified by the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB). More than 200,000 individuals have now been certified by PTCB since its inception in 1995, a number that is almost equal to the number of pharmacists in the U.S. This suggests a marketplace phenomenon that has the potential (if it hasn't already) of overwhelming the discussion on the other, equally critical, issues identified in the 2002 white paper.

While ACCP supports and applauds the increased visibility and utilization of PTCB certification, and understands that many technicians currently in practice have significant work-related experience and training that prepared them to be successfully certified, substantial work remains to be done in the other identified areas of pharmacy technician education and training to help assure an appropriately educated and prepared technical workforce in pharmacy now and in the future.

ACCP has adopted this position statement to make explicit the views of the organization on the issues identified in the 2002 white paper on pharmacy technicians, and to express its commitment to working collaboratively with other interested stakeholders to achieve changes in these key areas that will align with the position and vision of the College regarding the role of clinical pharmacists in improving the quality, safety, and effectiveness of medication use.

Indeed, ACCP believes that the widespread and successful provision of clinical pharmacy services in all settings of care will require a significant realignment, and expansion, of the practice activities of both pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. The necessary changes envisioned by visionary pharmacy educator Dr. Linwood Tice more than 40 years ago can wait no longer:

“The counting and pouring now often alleged to be the pharmacist’s chief occupation will in time be done by technicians and eventually by automation. The pharmacist of tomorrow will function by reason of what he knows, increasing the efficiency and safety of drug therapy and working as a specialist in his own right.”⁵

⁵ Sonnedecker G., Kremers E. Kremers and Urdang’s history of pharmacy. 4th ed. Madison, WI: American Institute of the History of Pharmacy; 1976:241.