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PATHOLOGISTS

Help! There's a Staffing Shortage in the Lab

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Melora Berardo MD, FCAP

- Member – CAP Practice Management Committee (PMC)
- AP/CP Board certified pathologist, with Cytopathology and Breast Fellowships
- Medical Director at Christus Santa Rosa New Braunfels in Texas for 22 years
- Solo private practice and owner for 11 years, subsequently joining larger private practice
- Current Managing Partner of Pathology Associates of San Antonio
- Member at Large, Texas Society of Pathology



Disclaimer

The information presented today represents the opinions of the panelists and does not represent the opinion or position of the CAP.

This should not be used as a substitute for professional assistance.

The information in this presentation is provided for educational purposes only and is not legal advice.

Joyce Schwartz MD, FCAP

- Medical Director of Pathology at the Methodist Hospital in San Antonio, Texas
- Previous Chief Laboratory Officer for Quest Diagnostics, Inc.



Linda Canada, BS MT (ASCP) Laboratory Director

- Laboratory Director, Methodist Hospital with over 20 years of Laboratory management experience
- Originally from Somerset, KY
- Graduate from Eastern KY University with BS in Medical Technology



Monika Pilichowska MD, FCAP

- Member – CAP Practice Management Committee (PMC)
- AP/CP Pathologist and Hematopathologist at Tufts Medical Center (TMC) in Boston (15+ years)
- Director of Clinical Hematology/Hematopathology Labs.
- Director of Flow Cytometry
- Director of Coagulation/Hemostasis Laboratory
- CLIA Director of TMC Cancer Center in Stoneham MA
- CAP LAP inspector
- Teacher, Director of Hematopathology Fellowship Program at TMC and Associate Professor of Pathology Laboratory Medicine and Medicine at Tufts Medical School



Peter Ercoli, Chief Operating Officer

- **BS Engineering, United States Military Academy, West Point, NY**
- **Commissioned US Army Officer**
- **35 years in Regulated Industries**
- **Business Leader in Medical Devices, Pharmaceutical Manufacturing (small and large molecule / Drug substance, Drug product), Diagnostic Lab Operations (CAP certified)**
- **6 Sigma / Lean trained**
- **Executive Leadership across 7 companies in US, Europe, Canada**



Topic for Today's Discussion

- What is the current laboratory workforce situation in the United States?
- What are your current strategies to retain your laboratory staff?
- With the FTE shortages, what changes in workflow and allocation have you adopted?
- What are non-monetary ways to increase job satisfaction in the laboratory workplace?



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Poll Question I

- *Are you currently experiencing staff shortages?*

What is the current laboratory workforce situation in the United States?

Current State of Affairs

- 7 billion clinical lab tests performed annually
- With rare exceptions, everyone gets a lab test
- Current lab staff shortages ~25,000 (337,800 practicing)
- Surveys reveal: burnout, inadequate staffing, too heavy of a workload, desire to work from home
- Travelers/competing hospitals
- The public doesn't see us

Current State of Affairs

- Training programs declining
- 240 Medical laboratory technician and scientist training programs in U.S.
- 7% drop from 2000
- Some states have no training programs
- Licensing requirements vary from state to state
- Discrepancy in pay – Medical laboratory professionals are paid 40-60% less than nurses, physical therapists or pharmacists

Current State of Affairs

- **To address the current situation – A coordinated commitment from all stakeholders is needed:**
 - **Laboratory and Medical Professional Organizations**
 - **Clinical Laboratories and Hospital Administration**
 - **Educational Institutions**
 - **Lab Industry**
 - **Federal and State Government Agencies**



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Poll Question II

- *In the past year were you able to successfully recruit laboratory staff?*

- What are your current strategies to retain your laboratory staff?
- With the FTE shortages, what changes in workflow and allocation have you adopted?

What are your current strategies to retain your laboratory staff?

- Identify team members you want to retain. Some resignations are a positive opportunity to restructure a team or change the team dynamics
 - ❖ Keeping staff engaged
 - Regular rounding with team members by management; monthly by manager with <45 FTE or bi-monthly for FTE>45
 - Regular team huddles
 - Management update the Stop Light Board monthly (suggestions for improvement, needs, etc.)
- Retention bonus
- Market Adjustments

What are your current strategies to retain your laboratory staff? Cont.

- Career Ladder for technical and non-technical staff

Technical staff

- ❖ CLS I

- ❖ CLS II

- ❖ CLS III

- ❖ CLS Team Lead

- ❖ Technical Supervisor

- ❖ Add a new Lab Technician Job Description as we were seeing many job candidates with a BS in Biology or Chemistry but no clinical lab background.

Nontechnical Staff

- ❖ Phlebotomist

- ❖ CLA

- ❖ CLA Team Lead

- ❖ CLS Team Lead

- ❖ Created a Non-Technical Supervisor position

- Dedicated recruiter for laboratory
- Clinical site for students in phlebotomy, histology and clinical laboratory

With the FTE shortages, what changes in workflow and allocation have you adopted?

- Evaluated in-house testing and moved some testing to reference lab (i.e., electrophoresis, manual serology, etc.)
- Batch testing set up (i.e., Coagulation factors performed 2X per week instead of 1 time per day)
- Training PCT staff to perform phlebotomy
- Training nursing staff to perform moderate complex and waived testing at Free Standing ER Lab and moving Lab staff to Hospital Lab



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Poll Question III

- *In the past year were you able to successfully retain laboratory staff?*

Staff Shortages

- Why do we care

Staff Leaving (retention)

- Who is leaving and why
- Retirement, commute, career
- Better pay
- Better shifts, weekend call
- Promotion
- Free parking
- Task diversification, learning
- Work environment, ergonomics

Difficulty in Recruiting New Hires

- Working with recruiters
- Working with local schools, colleges
- Internships, coops, volunteers
- Working with local PA school
- Travel agencies
- Word of mouth (via own employees)
- Overseas recruitment/visa sponsorship
- Promoting within

Silent Quitting

Beyond Recruitment and Retention

OUTSOURCING

INNOVATION

WORKFLOW IMPROVEMENT



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What are non-monetary ways to increase job satisfaction in the laboratory workplace?

A formula to retain and grow great employees



Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Hopper, Elizabeth. "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Explained." ThoughtCo, Aug. 18, 2021, [thoughtco.com/maslows-hierarchy-of-needs-4582571](https://www.thoughtco.com/maslows-hierarchy-of-needs-4582571).



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Resources

Practice Management

- <https://www.cap.org/member-resources/practice-management>

Practice Management Articles

- <https://www.cap.org/member-resources/articles/category/practice-management>

Pathology Business Fundamentals Online Courses

- Course Package: <https://learn.cap.org/lms/activity?@curriculum.id=-1&@activity.id=7808307&@activity.bundleActivityId=-1>
- Individual Course: <https://learn.cap.org/lms/catalog?@searchCatalog.search=PBF22&@searchCatalog.type=-1&@searchCatalog.location=&@searchCatalog.termId=>

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