Help! There’s a Staffing Shortage in the Lab

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Disclaimer

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- Business Leader in Medical Devices, Pharmaceutical Manufacturing (small and large molecule / Drug substance, Drug product), Diagnostic Lab Operations (CAP certified)
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- 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?
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:
  o Laboratory and Medical Professional Organizations
  o Clinical Laboratories and Hospital Administration
  o Educational Institutions
  o Lab Industry
  o Federal and State Government Agencies
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

    o Regular team huddles

    o 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
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
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

Resources

Practice Management
  o https://www.cap.org/member-resources/practice-management

Practice Management Articles
  o https://www.cap.org/member-resources/articles/category/practice-management

Pathology Business Fundamentals Online Courses
  o Course Package: https://learn.cap.org/lms/activity?@curriculum.id=-1&@activity.id=7808307&@activity.bundleActivityId=-1
  o Individual Course: https://learn.cap.org/lms/catalog?@searchCatalog.search=PBF22&@searchCatalog.type=-1&@searchCatalog.location=&@searchCatalog.termlD=
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