

PTEC and AACP: Meeting the Challenge

EARL R MCKINSTRY

I would like to thank the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP) and Richard P Penna PharmD, executive vice president of AACP, in particular for this opportunity to bring you greetings from a small but mighty group of enthusiastic instructors of pharmacy technicians nationwide. The Pharmacy Technician Educators Council (PTEC) has existed since 1989 and has had the privilege of meeting concurrently with AACP since their 1994 meeting in Philadelphia. As a fledgling group of educators, we truly appreciate AACP taking us under their wing and helping us expand our influence on technician education throughout the country.

Pharmacy technician education has formally existed for more than 50 years in the military and, since 1969, in the civilian sector, when Rhode Island Hospital initiated the first formal pharmacy technician training program. Since then, many important milestones have been crossed in pharmacy technician education, with several within the past five or six years. The White Paper on Pharmacy Technicians was published in 1996 by the American Pharmaceutical Association and American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP), defining terms such as "registration" and "certification," as well as outlining the ever-increasing role of the pharmacy technician. The Model Curriculum for Pharmacy Technicians was published by ASHP in 1996 after input from a variety of organizations, including AACP and PTEC. In addition, ASHP has been accrediting pharmacy technician training programs for almost 20 years, and their accreditation guidelines now follow the Model Curriculum. Ultimately, the real hallmark for technician credibility came in 1995 with the creation of the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB) and the advent of the national certification examination for pharmacy technicians. PTEC members have been instrumental in all areas of the examination, and today more than 80,000 technicians are nationally certified.

The field of pharmacy has changed immensely over the past 10–15 years, with the growing acceptance of clinical pharmacy, pharmaceutical care, and the pharmacy

schools' switch to exclusively offer the Doctor of Pharmacy degree. The fact that pharmacists are involved every day with disease-state management, ever-increasing specialization, and providing better outcomes for their patients could only be accomplished with the teamwork between pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. Highly trained, skilled, and motivated pharmacy technicians, under the direction of a registered pharmacist, have been able to accept the challenges given to them. They now perform the majority of the tasks required to fill literally millions of prescriptions in pharmacies each day. By doing so in a safe and efficient manner, the technicians allow the pharmacist time to better practice pharmaceutical care.

We face a critical shortage of pharmacists today and for the foreseeable future. Considering that and the fact that pharmacies fill up to 3 billion prescriptions each year, a figure that is projected to double within the next five years, there is a greater need than ever to educate pharmacy technician professionals to assist in all areas of pharmaceutical dispensing.

Currently, several organizations across the country are looking into three of the most important areas of concern for pharmacy technicians: (1) education, (2) certification, and (3) registration. These organizations, including the Council on Credentialing in Pharmacy, are considering revisions for the White Paper on Technicians as well as holding a national conference on pharmacy technician issues. PTEC has also been a leading organization involved with all areas of technician education and utilization, including the newly published second edition of the Model Curriculum, the PTCB, and the movement to have state boards of pharmacy register all pharmacy technicians.

We would like to continue partnering with AACP to expand the education and utilization of pharmacy technicians. Our plans include continuing to meet annually, as well as expanding into other avenues that will allow us to better educate pharmacy technicians, who are critical team members in the filling of all prescriptions for our patients.

EARL R MCKINSTRY RPh, Past President, Pharmacy Technician Educators Council; Director, Pharmacy Technician Programs, West Dakota Technical Institute, 800 Mickelson Dr., Rapid City, SD 57703-4018 FAX 605/394-1789, E-mail earlm@wdti.tec.sd.us. *Reprints:* Earl R McKinstry RPh.

Presented at the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy Annual Meeting, July 6–11, 2001, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.