



## **Wheel of Pharmacy Technician Career Opportunities: How to Hit the Jackpot**

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## Wheel of Pharmacy Technician Career Opportunities: How to Hit the Jackpot

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## Learning Objectives

- Explain how pharmacy technician scope of practice and regulations vary amongst states.
- Identify resources for pharmacy technician education and training.
- Describe innovative roles of pharmacy technicians.

## Pharmacy Technician: Definition

- An individual who, under the direct supervision and control of a pharmacist performs non-discretionary tasks
  - Pharmacist to technician ratios vary among states and practice settings (inpatient vs. outpatient)
- Some states refer to pharmacy technicians as
  - “unlicensed personnel” (Colorado)
  - “ancillary personnel” (District of Columbia)
  - “pharmaceutical technicians” (New York)
  - “unlicensed person” (North Dakota)
  - “registered pharmacy technician” (Wyoming)
  - “qualified pharmacy technician” (Ohio)

[www.uspharmd.com/technician/pharmacy\\_technician/](http://www.uspharmd.com/technician/pharmacy_technician/)  
[www.doh.state.fl.us/mqa/pharmacy/rule\\_64B16-27-410.pdf](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/mqa/pharmacy/rule_64B16-27-410.pdf)

Most states allow each pharmacist to supervise more than \_\_\_\_ technicians.

?

- A. 5
- B. There is no limit on number of technicians
- C. All of the above
- D. None of the above

## Technician Scope of Practice

- Scope of practice varies from state to state
  - Assist pharmacist in labeling/filling prescriptions (inpatient and outpatient dispensing)
  - Assist patients in dropping off and picking up prescriptions
  - Entering prescriptions into the computer
  - Compound oral solutions, ointments, creams, IV medications
  - Prepackage bulk medications
  - Medication ordering/purchasing, billing
  - Work with insurance carriers to obtain payments and refilling authority
- In the U.S. Air Force, Army, Coast Guard and Navy, pharmacy technicians can dispense medications under the supervision of pharmacists

[www.uspharmd.com/technician/pharmacy\\_technician/](http://www.uspharmd.com/technician/pharmacy_technician/)

Technician's scope of practice is regulated by

?

- A. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
- B. The Joint Commission (TJC)
- C. State Board of Pharmacy
- D. All of the above

## Technician Scope of Practice

- Pharmacy technicians shall not
  - Override computer alerts without first notifying the pharmacist
  - Transfer prescriptions from one pharmacy to another pharmacy
  - Receive new verbal prescriptions
  - Verify dosage and directions
  - Provide patient counseling

[www.uspharmd.com/technician/pharmacy\\_technician](http://www.uspharmd.com/technician/pharmacy_technician)

## Pharmacy Technician: Requirements

- Requirement for pharmacy technicians to be
  - Registered
  - Licensed
  - Certified
  - Incorporated in state regulations
- Some states set minimum age, education and training requirements, check for a criminal record

[www.uspharmd.com/technician/pharmacy\\_technician](http://www.uspharmd.com/technician/pharmacy_technician)

## Current Landscape

- The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) in the U.S. Department of Labor estimated
  - 334,400 pharmacy technicians (2010)
- Employment for Pharmacy technicians is expected to grow by at least 32% through the year 2020

<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/pharmacy-technicians.htm>

## Active PTCB Certified Pharmacy Technicians by State



Reprinted with permission from the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board

## Technician Work Settings

- Hospital
- Community chain or independent pharmacy
- Long-term care facilities
- Insurance companies
- Mail order pharmacies
- Managed care
- Companies specializing in automation and inventory management
- Education and training
- Federal (U.S. Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Navy)

Myers CE. *Am J Health-Syst Pharm.* 200; 68: 1128–36.

## Pharmacy Practice Models in Health Systems

- Redesigning pharmacy practice models to meet patient needs
  - Free up pharmacists for more clinical roles
  - Train pharmacy technicians to support pharmacists
    - Combination of education in the workplace and specialized training/education
  - Expand pharmacy technician roles

Myers CE. *Am J Health-Syst Pharm.* 200; 68: 1128–36.  
<http://www.ashpmedia.org/ppmi/>

## Technician Training Programs

- No national standard for pharmacy technician education and training in the U.S.
- Do your research before committing to a training program
- Pharmacy technician programs should offer at least the following
  - Cover pharmaceutical compounding, pharmacology, drug distribution, pharmaceutical law and ethics and in depth knowledge about the industry
  - Adequate training time (anywhere between 6 months to 2 years)
  - An externship/experience in a pharmacy
  - Offer student financing

<http://www.pharmacytechniciantraining.org/training/>

## Technician Training Program Accreditation

- American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) is the leading national accrediting body specifically for Pharmacy Technician Training Programs (in 1983)
  - Standardized education and training
  - Credibility and competitive advantage over other programs
- A directory of accredited training programs is available on ASHP website

<http://www.ashp.org/DocLibrary/Accreditation/ASHPTechTrainingProg.aspx>

- “ASHP Accreditation sets a high national standard for all pharmacy technicians across the board. With this training, students will be able to function in any location, and in any state”

**Janie March, CPhT, B.S.**  
**Director, Pharmacy Technician Program**  
**Carver Career and Technical Education Center**  
**Charleston, WV**

<http://www.ashp.org/DocLibrary/Accreditation/ASHPTechTrainingProg.aspx>

## Technician Residency

- North Carolina's vision is to expand pharmacy technician roles
  - A two-year Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree program in Pharmacy Technology for pharmacy technicians, developed by health-system pharmacies in collaboration with community colleges and PTCB

The Pharmacy Technician Workforce Coalition of the Triad and PTCB position pharmacy technicians for employment: creating career ladders for pharmacy technicians in North Carolina. <http://www.ptcb.org/about-ptcb/news-room/news-landing/2011/07/18/the-pharmacy-technician-workforce-coalition-of-the-triad-and-ptcb-position-pharmacy-technicians-for-employment>

Many organizations (hospitals and community pharmacies) require technicians to be



- Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS) certified
- Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB) certified
- Board Certified Pharmacotherapy Specialist (BCPS) certified
- None of the above

## Technician Certification

- In 1980's, pharmacy associations launched examination-based certification programs
- In 1995 national voluntary certification examination was launched by the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB)
  - Approximately 25% of hospitals require newly hired pharmacy technicians to be PTCB certified
  - ASHP supports certification by PTCB
- The Institute for the Certification of Pharmacy Technicians (ICPT) also offers Exam for the Certification of Pharmacy Technicians, ExCPT

Myers CE. *Am J Health-Syst Pharm.* 200; 68: 1128–36.  
<http://www.pharmacytechnician.org/en/art/255/>

## C.R.E.S.T. Summit

- PTCB supports the concept of expanding pharmacy technician roles
- C.R.E.S.T. summit focused on the areas of
  - Consumer awareness
  - Resources
  - Education
  - State policy
  - Testing relating to pharmacy technicians
- Recommendations from the summit include eligibility requirements for the PTCB Certification Program, requirements for recertification, and the creation of new specialty certification programs

C.R.E.S.T. Initiative <http://www.ptcb.org/about-ptcb/crest-initiative>

## C.R.E.S.T. Summit

*"Pharmacy technicians play an integral role in supporting pharmacy practitioners in virtually all practice settings." "Feedback from the Summit, survey, and social media show that significant steps are being taken to support innovation in the roles and responsibilities of pharmacy technicians through education, training, and PTCB certification."*

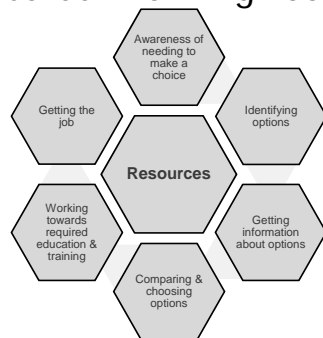
Melissa Murer Corrigan, R.Ph.  
Executive Director and CEO of PTCB

*"With the growing complexity of medications and focus on medication safety, technicians play an essential role in the medication use process."*  
*"Opportunities are increasing for pharmacy technicians to progress through career ladders where they can develop knowledge and skills and specialize in areas such as compliance, medication use technology, and informatics."*

Rita Shane, Pharm.D., Director of Pharmacy Services at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center

C.R.E.S.T. Initiative <http://www.ptcb.org/about-ptcb/crest-initiative>

## Career Planning Tool



Harris-Bowlsbey, J., et al (2002). The Internet: a tool for career planning. Tulsa, OK: National Career Development Association  
<http://usm.maine.edu/eco/career-planning-tools>

## Career Planning

- Look out for opportunities at work
  - Pay attention to what's going on at your organization and what are some goals that the department wants to achieve
  - Volunteer yourself to work with the management team on new initiatives and be part of the pilot studies
  - Provide your input to the management team
- Example: hospital is looking into reducing 30-day readmissions
  - Pharmacy department wants to start a pilot program targeting discharge patients
    - Goal: discharge patients get their prescriptions filled at the time of discharge from the hospital

## Career Planning

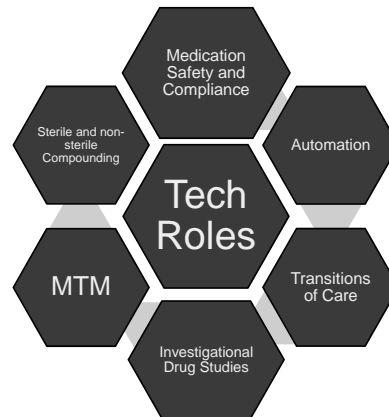
- Speak with your supervisor/manager about career opportunities. Don't assume your supervisor knows you are interested if you don't ask.
  - How can I help with new pilots and initiatives?
  - Will I get extra training?
  - Can I volunteer my time to be part of the pilot study?
- Get extra certifications to differentiate yourself from others
  - Six Sigma
  - Basic Life Support
  - Leadership training
  - Sterile and non-sterile compounding

## Career Planning

- Get involved with state and national pharmacy associations
  - Attend state and national pharmacy meetings
    - American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP)
    - American Pharmacists Association (APhA)
    - Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy (AMCP)
  - Know what's going on at state and national level that affects pharmacy profession
    - "The President of the United States recognizes pharmacists in California as health care providers" (October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013)
  - Network
- Always think ahead and plan your future

## Advancing Pharmacy Technician Roles

- Increased focus on safety, regulatory compliance, automation, transitions of care, sterile compounding, drug shortages
- Ability to allocate pharmacist resources to other initiatives
- Cost savings (tech vs. pharmacist salary)
- Creates advanced and specialized role for pharmacy technicians



Innovative Roles

## MEDICATION SAFETY AND COMPLIANCE TECHNICIAN

## Medication Safety and Compliance Technician

- Works closely with Medication Safety Coordinator and Pharmacy Compliance Coordinator
- Responsible for inpatient, outpatient, and Hospital Outpatient Departments (e.g. Emergency Department, Cath Lab)

## Medication Safety and Compliance Technician

- Drug recalls
  - Monitor drug recalls from board of pharmacy, FDA, manufacturers, wholesalers
  - Work with staff to retrieve recalled products and maintain documentation
- Maintain medication safety and regulatory website
  - Resource for department as well as institution
- Coordinate inspection assignments
  - Assign staff inspection areas to check for expired medications
  - Maintain documentation for all inspections

## Medication Safety and Compliance Technician

- Perform audits and tracers
  - Storage of high alert and look-alike/sound-alike drugs in pharmacy, nursing units, and automated dispensing cabinets (ADCs)
- Organize and analyze medication use data
- Department orientation with new hired staff
- Create safety tools for the department
- Assists with review of policies and procedures to assure compliance with state and national regulations

Innovative Roles

## TRANSITIONS OF CARE TECHNICIAN: INPATIENT AND OUTPATIENT

## Medication Reconciliation: Definition

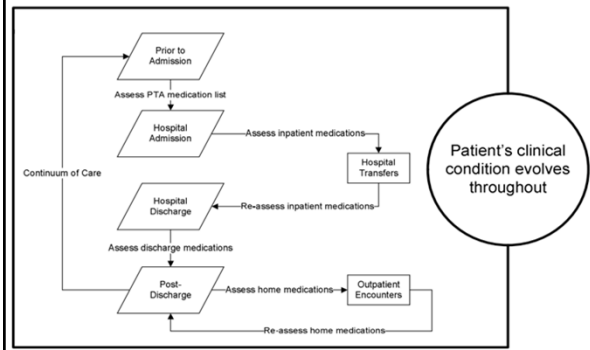
- The process of identifying the most accurate list of all medications that the patient is taking, including name, dosage, frequency, and route, by comparing the medical record to an external list of medications obtained from a patient, hospital, or other provider(s)

## Medication Reconciliation: Purpose

- To obtain a complete, accurate medication list with last doses taken to continue to provide patient care
- To determine formulary alternatives for their home regimen in order to treat the patient during hospitalization
- An accurate medication list is essential to prevent patient harm
- Medication list is generated from different sources (e.g. doctor's office, hospitals, outpatient pharmacies, home health agencies, skilled nursing facilities)

Kwan, JL; Lo, L. Medication Reconciliation During Transitions of Care as a Patient Safety Strategy. *Ann Intern Med.* 2013;158:397-403.

## Ensuring the Accuracy of the Medication List



Reprinted with permission from Cedars-Sinai Department of Pharmacy

## Transitions of Care Technician: Inpatient

- Works with clinical pharmacists to gather medication histories for high risk patients
  - Emergency department patients who are getting admitted
  - Hospitalists (patients seen by specific group of physicians)
  - Patients with congestive heart failure (CHF)
  - Patients admitted from Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNFs)
- Reducing readmissions for patients who were recently discharged from the hospital within 30 days
  - 20 percent of hospitalized Medicare patients readmitted to hospital within 30 days; half re-hospitalized without seeing a doctor after discharge

<http://www.commonwealthfund.org/News/News-Releases/2009/Apr/New-Study-20-Percent-of-Hospitalized-Medicare-Patients-Readmitted-To-Hospital-Within-30-Days.aspx>

## Transitions of Care Technician: Inpatient

- Works with clinical pharmacists to gather medication histories from patients
- Interview the patient/family members, call outpatient pharmacies, SNFs
  - Depending on patient's medication literacy either interview the patient or obtain information from the outpatient pharmacy they go to
  - Ask open ended questions without giving out answers
    - Do you know what medications you take at home?
    - Review the name of the medication (brand/generic), strength, and how the patient takes it at home (when, with or without food)
- Address patient's questions
  - Pharmacist addresses all questions related to medications, side effects, indications, compliance, cost

## Transitions of Care Technician: Outpatient

- Works with nurses, pharmacists, inpatient patient care technicians (PCTs), physicians, social workers to facilitate discharge prescriptions
- Responsible for billing insurance, processing and filling prescriptions, coordinating medication deliveries to the patient
- Works with social workers to assure patients have medications before they are discharge to avoid readmissions

Innovative Roles

## **AUTOMATION TECHNICIAN: INPATIENT, OUTPATIENT AND INDUSTRY**

## Automation Technician: Inpatient

- Monitors and adjusts ADC's inventory based on usage to optimized stock levels
- Manages the configuration and rollout of new automation:
  - Assesses inventory needs
  - Configures devices
  - Loads devices
  - Tests functionality and assures that data is accurately loaded
  - Coordinates with pharmacists to install devices
- Incorporates Pharmacy and Therapeutics (P&T) Committee decisions into each automation system as appropriate
- Assists in development of clinical rules / alerts relating to medication use and set-up as needed
- Trains new hired staff

## Automation Technician: Inpatient

- Assures pharmacy information system integrates with pharmacy automation
- Assists with Barcode Medication Administration (BCMA)
- Liaison for problem solving for pharmacy automated systems
- Identifies and resolves problems or areas needing improvement
- Processes narcotic discrepancies
- Investigates and reports medication errors and takes steps to prevent future errors

## Automation Technician: Outpatient

- Responsible for troubleshooting
- Maintains automation
  - Robot that counts and labels medications
  - Medication storage: pick-to-light inventory control system
  - Will-call system
- Works with pharmacy supervisor to maintain pharmacy inventory

Innovative Roles

## **INVESTIGATIONAL DRUG SERVICE**



## Investigational Drug Services

- Medications dispensed for patients that are on clinical trials
- Works closely with investigational drug pharmacist
- Regulations for investigational drug studies
  - Recordkeeping requirements
  - Labeling and dispensing requirements

## Investigational Drug Services Technician

- Prepares, delivers, and distributes investigational medications to appropriate care areas or patient locations
  - Labeling, packaging, obtaining medication and getting it ready for distribution
  - Performs mail-out of research medications to other facilities, patients, or returns to sponsor
- Performs reconciliation of medications returned and not used in research studies
- Performs inventory control functions of medications
- Manages and monitors research medications supply to prevent study shortages

## Investigational Drug Services Technician

- Compounds medications
  - Performs extemporaneous compounding under supervision of pharmacist following quality control requirements and required documentation for research studies
  - Calculates, prepares, documents, and labels investigational drugs per study protocol
- Assists in orientation of pharmacy staff to new protocols
- Prepares standard operating procedures (SOPs) for operational integration of studies into day-to-day operations

## Investigational Drug Services Technician

- Assists with research study setup with sponsors and study team members
  - Coordinates sponsor initial and subsequent visits
  - Participates in gathering data for Pharmacy Research Agreement budget documents where necessary
- Organizes protocol binders and research related files

## Investigational Drug Services Technician

- Provides direct database management and computes statistical reports
  - Reconciles workload and billing reports against study records
  - Prepares monthly research billing by study
- Conducts audits of research locations for compliance with regulatory agencies

## Summary

- There are many differences among states in the training requirements and scope of practice for technicians
- Need for standardized pharmacy technician education, training, and formalized competency-based training programs
- Pharmacy department leadership should consider
  - Using pharmacy technicians to their fullest potential to allow pharmacists to take on more clinical responsibilities
  - Provide opportunities for expanding and creating new technician roles

### **S E L E C T E D   R E F E R E N C E S**

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### ASSESSMENT TEST



This assessment test has been provided as a study aid only. When you reach the end of the presentation, follow instructions to complete the online process and obtain CE credit. You may print your CE statement immediately after successful completion of the online assessment test and evaluation.

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1. It is within a pharmacy technician's scope of practice to
  - a. Assist pharmacists in labeling/filling prescriptions.
  - b. Assist patients in dropping off and picking up prescriptions.
  - c. Provide patient counseling.
  - d. A and B.
2. Is the following statement True or False? There is no limit to how many technicians each pharmacist is allowed to supervise in any state.
  - a. True.
  - b. False.
3. Is the following statement true or False? A technician's scope of practice is regulated by The Food and Drug Administration (FDA).
  - a. True.
  - b. False.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is the leading national accrediting body specifically for pharmacy technician training programs.
  - a. C.R.E.S.T.
  - b. American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP).
  - c. Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB).
  - d. None of the above.
5. Some states refer to pharmacy technicians as
  - a. Unlicensed personnel.
  - b. Ancillary personnel.
  - c. Pharmaceutical technicians.
  - d. All of the above.
6. Is the following statement True or False? Many organizations (hospitals and community pharmacies) require technicians to be Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB) certified.
  - a. True.
  - b. False.

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7. C.R.E.S.T. did **NOT** focus on which of the following areas?
  - a. Consumer awareness.
  - b. Resources and state policy.
  - c. Wages and salary.
  - d. Education and testing.
  
8. Some benefits of expanding pharmacy technician roles include:
  - a. Ability to allocate pharmacist resources to other initiatives.
  - b. Cost savings (technician vs. pharmacist salary).
  - c. Creates advanced and specialized role for pharmacy technicians
  - d. All of the above.
  
9. Medication safety and compliance technician is responsible for:
  - a. Drug recalls.
  - b. Staff training.
  - c. Performing audits.
  - d. Reviewing policies and procedures.
  - e. All of the above.
  
10. \_\_\_\_\_ technician is responsible for gathering medication histories from patients.
  - a. Transitions of care.
  - b. Medication safety and compliance.
  - c. Automation.
  - d. IV sterile compounding technician.