

# Pharmacy Technician Education, Certification, Training, Evaluation, and Regulation

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## INTRODUCTION

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Pharmacy technicians have been assisting in compounding sterile preparations since the early years of formal intravenous (IV) admixture programs, and their performance has been studied and documented for nearly 40 years.<sup>1</sup> In 1991, ASHP held a conference on quality assurance for pharmacy-prepared sterile preparations.<sup>2</sup> Conference proceedings listed several problems related to pharmacy technician training for compounding sterile preparations:

1. Many pharmacy technicians lack education and training on the preparation of sterile preparations.
2. Many pharmacy technicians do not understand applicable quality assurance principles.
3. Mere experience in the preparation of sterile preparations does not impart the knowledge and understanding necessary to ensure their accurate and safe preparation.

## ADVANCES IN TECHNICIAN EDUCATION, CERTIFICATION, TRAINING, AND REGULATION

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In the quarter century that followed, there have been many advances in training and evaluating pharmacy technicians, including improved education and training in compounding sterile preparations<sup>3</sup>:

- 1991—The Pharmacy Technician Educators Council (PTEC) was formed.
- 1994—The Scope of Pharmacy Practice Project was completed, including a task analysis of what technicians do.<sup>4</sup>
- 1995—ASHP, the American Pharmaceutical Association (now American Pharmacists Association, APhA), the Illinois Council of Health-System Pharmacists, and the Michigan

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*Note:* The author acknowledges E. Clyde Buchanan who authored this chapter in the first edition of this text.

Pharmacists Association created the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB) as an independent body to develop and administer national voluntary pharmacy technician certification examinations.

- 1996—ASHP and APhA prepared a White Paper on pharmacy technicians urging planning for uniform national standards for pharmacy technician training.<sup>5</sup>
- 1997—ASHP, APhA, the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy, the American Association of Pharmacy Technicians, and PTEC collaborated to create the Model Curriculum for Pharmacy Technician Training.
- 2000—The PTCB conducted an updated task analysis of what pharmacy technicians do.
- 2001—The second edition of the *Model Curriculum for Pharmacy Technician Training* was published.
- 2003—The White paper on Pharmacy Technicians 2002, “Needed Changes Can No Longer Wait,” was published.<sup>6</sup>
- 2008—The ASHP Pharmacy Technician Training Program Directory listed 116 accredited programs.
- 2008—In response to the tragic death of a 2-year-old that involved a pharmacy technician sterile compounding error, U.S. Representative Steven LaTourette (R-Ohio) introduced legislation that would require standardizing training and registration for pharmacy technicians. (This legislation was not enacted.)<sup>7</sup>
- 2009—The Council on Credentialing in Pharmacy (CCP) published a resource paper on contemporary pharmacy practice, which included an examination of the roles, responsibilities, and functions of pharmacy technicians.<sup>8</sup>
- 2009—CCP published a detailed plan for a uniform national system of regulating pharmacy technician registration, training, and competency assessment in the United States.<sup>9</sup>
- 2011—ASHP announced the Pharmacy Practice Model Initiative with statement on advancing the roles of pharmacy technicians and a call for the certifications for specialized technician practice areas such as sterile compounding.<sup>10</sup>
- 2014—ASHP and the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) formed the

Pharmacy Technician Accreditation Commission (PTAC) and adopted a new accreditation standard.

- 2014—ASHP published the fourth edition of *Model Curriculum for Pharmacy Technician Education and Training Programs*.
- 2016—ASHP/ACPE implemented an updated accreditation standard (previously interpreted as requiring simulated or experiential training in IV admixture) allowing accredited pharmacy technician education and training programs to choose whether they provide hands-on training in sterile compounding, nonsterile compounding, or both.<sup>11</sup>

## TECHNICIAN INVOLVEMENT IN STERILE PREPARATIONS

Pharmacy technicians are actively involved in all aspects of pharmaceutical care. CCP, in its report on the scope of pharmacy practice, found that 66% of certified technicians’ time is spent in assisting the pharmacist and serving patients, with 22% maintaining medication and inventory control systems, and 12% participating in pharmacy practice management and administration.<sup>12</sup> For health-system pharmacy technicians, preparing IV admixtures was among the primary responsibilities listed.

The fourth edition of the *Model Curriculum for Pharmacy Technician Training* has 46 stated goals organized into nine categories.<sup>13</sup> Although many of these goals are applicable to a wide range of technician skills (e.g., demonstrate ethical conduct, apply patient- and medication-safety practices), two of the categories include objectives with particular relevance to training pharmacy technicians to compound sterile preparations (**Table 24-1**).

## TECHNICIAN EDUCATION

### TECHNICIAN EDUCATORS

PTEC was organized in 1991 with a mission to assist the profession of pharmacy in preparing “high quality, well-trained technical personnel through education and practical training.”<sup>14</sup> PTEC members instruct and administer a variety of types of technician training programs, with a membership