

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2022



ASCP
BOARD OF
CERTIFICATION®

**Providing excellence in
certification of laboratory
professionals on behalf
of patients worldwide.**

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**Susan Graham, MS,
MT(ASCP)SH^{CM}**

CHAIR'S MESSAGE

In anticipation of spring and its new beginnings, I find myself reflecting on the last two years of the pandemic and its effect on our personal and professional lives. Few of us have emerged unscathed from the pandemic, the uncertainty, fear, and in many cases, devastating loss. As we look to our colleagues, however, we see professionals dedicated to the care of our patients, the support of our learners, and a foundation of collaboration and partnership. The ASCP Board of Certification (BOC) Board of Governors (BOG) benefits from the alliance of our sponsoring (ASCP, ASCLS, and AGT), participating (AABB, AAPA, ASM, ASC, CLMA, and NSH), and collaborating (AACC, and ASH) societies. Each of these organizations has representation on the BOG. In addition, we work closely with ABHES, CAAHEP, CCCLW, and NAACLS to address the needs of program directors, faculty, learners, and professionals in pursuit of the level of excellence that BOC certification signifies.

At a recent meeting of clinical laboratory educators, someone asked me what they could do to help alleviate the workforce shortage. In my mind, that question led to several others:

WHO?

In this challenging time, it is important to clearly identify who we are and the role we play in patient care. In the spirit of collaboration, members of the BOC Board of Governors partnered with representatives of ASCLS to develop a position paper entitled “[Standardizing the Professional Title of Medical Laboratory Scientists](#).” Establishing a unified identity for our professions has been a priority of the BOC and, to that end, the BOC will transition the MT (Medical Technologist) credentialed individuals to the MLS (Medical Laboratory Scientist) credential in 2022. In this same time frame, individuals with the MP (Molecular Pathology) credential will be transitioned to MB (Molecular Biology). Finally, consistent with these transitions, the BOG approved new names for certifications in the area of Cytology.

Cytologist replaced Cytotechnologist and Specialist in Cytology replaced Specialist in Cytotechnology in January of this year. Using and sharing these titles broadly will create a culture of solidarity and cohesion.

WHAT?

A united front will strengthen the effectiveness of advocacy for our professions. For example, while the pandemic has raised the awareness of increasing needs of health professionals and the workforce crisis, legislative efforts continue to focus on the shortage of nurses and physicians. We need to be consistent in advocating for the inclusion of laboratory professionals in actions that help in the recruitment and retention of the healthcare workforce. The BOC has worked closely with the ASCP Center for Science, Technology, and Policy to support issues that focus on workforce development, licensure, and potential program closures.

WHEN?

While we often focus on Laboratory Professionals Week to showcase the substantial contribution we make to healthcare, I would suggest that these efforts need to be consistent throughout the year. If the last two years have taught us anything, it's that taking care of the care-giver is an important consideration. In response, the BOC has developed a time-limited opportunity to include COVID-related activities to meet, in part, the requirements of [CMP](#). In support of educators and their programs, the BOC compiled a list of [resources](#) to share best practices and ideas. Program directors and faculty can find education, advice, and mentorship through the [BOC Program Directors FaceBook group](#).

All of these initiatives are most effective if developed and managed with the help of our colleagues. Remember, the “lab” is central to colLABoration! On behalf of the BOC Board of Governors, I would like to express our wish that you continue to take good care of yourself and each other.

BEYOND COVID-19: THE FUTURE OF THE MEDICAL LABORATORY PROFESSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on daily life around the world, but its impact on the medical laboratory profession has been equally unprecedented.

In order to gain a better understanding of this impact, the ASCP Board of Certification (BOC) interviewed medical laboratory professionals and educators from around the world to get their perspectives on the pandemic and the future of the medical laboratory profession.

The following interviews were conducted in February 2022, and feature interviews with members of the ASCP BOC's advisory boards and other volunteers from its international network. The ASCP BOC hopes that these interviews help give the reader a global perspective of what the medical laboratory profession may look like post-pandemic, as well as insight into the important role that an ASCP BOC credential will have in this new post-pandemic reality.

AUSTRALIA

Tony Badrick

Chief Executive, Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia

Chair, BOC Australia Advisory Board

GREECE

Dionysis Vourtsis, BSc

National Primary Healthcare Network

BOC Greece Advisory Board & ASCPⁱ Ambassador to Europe

ECUADOR

Henry Alvarez, MD

Chair, Sociedad Ecuatoriana de Tecnólogos Médicos en Laboratorio Clínico (SOTEMELAB)

Chair, BOC Ecuador Advisory Board

ETHIOPIA

Tedla Mindaye Kelecha,

MS, MLS(ASCP)ⁱCM
Ethiopian Medical Laboratory Association (EMLA)

Chair, BOC Ethiopia Advisory Board

JAPAN

Mari Kunihiro,

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ASCP BOC/JAMT Exchange Visitor (2019)

JORDAN

Maher A. Sughayer,

MD, FCAP
King Hussein Cancer Center

Chair, BOC Jordan Advisory Board

PHILIPPINES

Agnes B. Medenilla,

BSMT, MS, MT(ASCP), RMT(PCR)
College of Medical Technology, University of Perpetual Help

Chair, BOC Philippines Advisory Board

SOUTH KOREA

Hyo Chan Kang

Daegu Haany University

Chair, BOC Korea Advisory Board

TAIWAN

Yao-Lung Tsai, PhD

Clinical Laboratory Director, Sin-Lau Hospital

BOC Taiwan Advisory Board

UGANDA

Emmanuel Oluka, MBA

Uganda Advisory Board Coordinator, Laboratory Team Leader

BOC Uganda Advisory Board

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (U.A.E.)

Rana Nabulsi,

MSc, CPHQ
Elite Quality & Safety Consultancy and Training LLC

Chair, BOC United Arab Emirates Advisory Board



AUSTRALIA

Tony Badrick

*Chief Executive, Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia
Chair, BOC Australia Advisory Board*

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected you personally and professionally?

Work has continued, and thankfully I have not been infected. Travel restrictions were severe in Australia. Most of the staff (about 90%) work from home. Labs were badly affected in terms of testing requirements, lack of staff, and diminished morale.

Now that the COVID-19 pandemic seems to be waning (or at least becoming less virulent, and likely endemic), what makes you hopeful about the future of the medical laboratory profession in your country and around the world?

It is waning, and we are learning to live with the virus.

What do you think the medical laboratory profession is going to look like post-pandemic? Will it be different? How will it be different?

I think labs will be better prepared for the next pandemic. Labs have become less centralized as a lot of point-of-care testing is now done outside the lab.

Has the pandemic had a negative effect on students wanting to pursue medical laboratory science as a profession?

The opposite. Every student gets a job, and the virus has stimulated interest in medical laboratory science and pathology.



GREECE

Dionysis Vourtsis, BSc

*National Primary Healthcare Network
BOC Greece Advisory Board & ASCPⁱ Ambassador to Europe*

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected you personally and professionally?

Laboratories and biomedical laboratory professionals are playing an important role in the fight against COVID-19, as they could provide reliable and timely services in diagnosis and treatment, infectious disease surveillance, response and monitoring of the disease outbreak.

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has placed a significant demand on the laboratory profession, and many countries face an overall shortage of specialized personnel.

Despite the above-mentioned importance, and even during the COVID-19 era, we as medical laboratory scientists are working on the frontlines and behind the scenes, and our profession remains largely unknown. Unfortunately, policymakers and governments have still not understood the importance of those professionals. That's has an influence personally and professionally, as many professionals face burnout; at the same time, there is no recognition of the work that I do in the laboratory and how I contribute to society.



GREECE (CONTINUED)

Now that the COVID-19 pandemic seems to be waning (or at least becoming less virulent, and likely endemic), what makes you hopeful about the future of the medical laboratory profession in your country and around the world?

An estimated 70 percent of all decisions regarding a patient's diagnosis and treatment are based on laboratory test results. Additionally, there is an increased demand on healthcare delivery and laboratory services, because:

- People live longer and there is a population increase
- Obesity and chronic conditions still exist (arthritis, cancer, diabetes, neurological and heart disease, and unhealthy habits amongst individuals, e.g., smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, etc.)
- More people around the world could gain access to healthcare
- There will be a greater use of point-of-care testing and patient self-monitoring

All of the above will increase the need for medical laboratory scientists with competence in the biomedical laboratories, to guide and train other healthcare personnel and the general public, and help ensure correct delivery of results to hospitals and primary health care units.

What do you think the medical laboratory profession is going to look like post-COVID-19? Will it be different? How will it be different?

Yes, I think that it will be different, as the changes expected to take place in the healthcare system in the next years have all the potential to level-up our profession and the healthcare delivery system. There will be new and specialized methods of analysis:

- Advances in Genomics & Proteomics - Medical laboratory scientists with training and expertise in molecular diagnostics will be in high demand in the future.
- Personalized Medicine - Medical laboratory scientists will be able to have a role in providing personalized medicine, as providers of diagnostic and prognostic testing.

Therefore, our profession will be different, because there could be significant opportunities for medical laboratory scientists to practice at the highest level and to become partners in the new "healthcare teams."

Has the pandemic had a negative effect on students wanting to pursue medical laboratory science as a profession?

In my opinion, yes. The spread and intensity of the new coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, has affected the world; health care has responded with various measures, like quarantines, social distancing, and shutdowns. These measures have prohibited many potential students, even those who are highly motivated, to choose our profession.

Additionally, as we are working behind the scenes, our profession remains largely unknown to students and they are shifting in sciences, in which they could have a more visible career path.

A knowledgeable and capable medical laboratory scientist is crucial to any healthcare system and in laboratories.

In order to attract students, our educational programs need to add courses to their curricula, to meet the demands of the future healthcare system, like clinical genomics, biostatistics, personalized medicine, biosafety, etc., as well as to promote our profession to potential candidates!



GREECE (CONTINUED)

Why is an ASCP BOC credential still important in 2022?

Many local and international factors, like the aging workforce, shortage of qualified professionals, automation, lack of harmonization of medical laboratory education, and increased mobility of laboratory professionals, need flexibility and critical thinking as important qualifications of the medical laboratory scientists.

The ASCP BOC certification could benefit each professional locally and internationally, with:

- Increased confidence that they are competent and competitive
- Increased recognition from employers
- Increased visibility of the biosafety profession

ASCP BOC could also contribute to:

- Provide resources and tools for better decision-making in the laboratories
- Enhance multisectoral collaboration and whole-of-society approaches to our profession
- Promote a network between biomedical laboratory associations and professionals in different regions of the world
- Strengthen regional connection and cooperation between biomedical laboratory associations, partners, sponsors and stakeholders



ECUADOR

Henry Alvarez, MD

*Chair, Sociedad Ecuatoriana de Tecnólogos Médicos
en Laboratorio Clínico (SOTEMELAB)*

Chair, BOC Ecuador Advisory Board

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected you personally and professionally?

I can say that, either directly or indirectly, this pandemic changed us. We have undertaken extreme efforts to care for our daily development.

Now that the COVID-19 pandemic seems to be waning (or at least becoming less virulent, and likely endemic), what makes you hopeful about the future of the medical laboratory profession in your country and around the world?

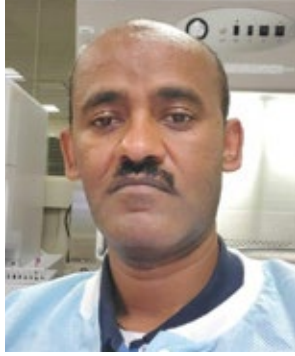
I believe that the future of our colleagues' careers in Ecuador and in the rest of the world will be very promising because the scientific advances have contributed to their development and skills. The pandemic has been controlled through diagnosis, treatment, and vaccines, which will allow it to become an endemic disease, such as cholera, malaria, H1N1, and others. Therefore, with these lessons, we hope that the government will value laboratory professionals and their importance in society for the prevention and diagnosis of diseases.

What do you think the medical laboratory profession is going to look like post-pandemic? Will it be different? How will it be different?

It will be different because of the role that the laboratory profession plays in the national context. The laboratory profession will hopefully have more value and importance due to the role it fulfills.

Has the pandemic had a negative effect on students wanting to pursue medical laboratory science as a profession?

From my point of view, the negative effect on students has been seen in adjusting schedules and receiving virtual classes. Our profession is one of contact with the patient; it is for this reason that shortcomings manifest. Classes have become very theoretical; however, students need to recover the practical abilities and skills that they will need as future colleagues. I wonder if our profession can adapt to teleworking.



ETHIOPIA

Tedla Mindaye Kelecha, MS, MLS(ASCP)^{CM}

*Ethiopian Medical Laboratory Association (EMLA)
Chair, BOC Ethiopia Advisory Board*

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected you personally and professionally?

The COVID-19 pandemic has radically changed the way people live and work. Like many other businesses, laboratory professionals also continue to suffer from unprecedented challenges and fears. I work as a Medical Laboratory Scientist at a large hospital in Washington, DC. I struggled in adapting to the new social routines from choosing to skip in person gathering. Sometimes it is hard to physically distance from someone you love like family, friends, and coworkers.

Now that the COVID-19 pandemic seems to be waning (or at least becoming less virulent, and likely endemic), what makes you hopeful about the future of the medical laboratory profession in your country and around the world?

Currently, the coronavirus surge that has overwhelmed hospitals, and strained resources appears to be waning. But as we have seen during other phases of this pandemic, the surge in cases started at different times in different regions, so we still need indoor masking, getting vaccinated and receiving booster shots. In Ethiopia and around the world, we developed diagnostic capacity to identify and detect COVID-19, so we can use the platform to diagnose possible emerging infectious disease.

What do you think the medical laboratory profession is going to look like post-pandemic? Will it be different? How will it be different?

The pandemic has led to burnout for many laboratory professionals and potentially contributed to even more human resource shortages. On the other hand, the pandemic brought awareness to the role of medical laboratory in testing COVID-19; I hope this may create interest to join the medical laboratory profession in the long term. To increase the visibility of medical laboratory post-COVID-19, advocacy should be done to create awareness how medical laboratory professionals save lives every day in the shadows of health care.

Has the pandemic had a negative effect on students wanting to pursue medical laboratory science as a profession?

Students may personally be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. For the most part, it did not change their career choice because they are thinking about the impact of medical laboratory science professionals on people's lives and their skill to promptly diagnose for appropriate care.

Why is an ASCP BOC credential still important in 2022?

As we all know, certification is a tool (which confirms) a medical laboratory professional is competent to perform essential activity in the medical laboratory, including COVID-19 testing. To get greater career satisfaction and better payment, certification has a vital role.

Is there anything else you would like to share about the medical laboratory profession post-COVID-19?

The demand for technologists and other laboratory professionals has increased in recent years, especially since the start of COVID-19. When the pandemic hit the MLS program, the medical laboratory faced several challenges, including students being unable to complete their clinical rotation within the hospital laboratory. So, after the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, to combat the low number of laboratory professionals, educational programs should be expanded, and advocacy should be done to improve visibility of the profession.



JAPAN

Mari Kunihiro, H(ASCP)^{CM}

ASCP BOC/JAMT Exchange Visitor (2019)

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected you personally and professionally?

The pandemic has restricted my personal activity, and I'm a lot busier at work. I can no longer travel domestically or abroad. Exams are often postponed, and most conferences are now online. The new PCR machine at our hospital required extra training, and everyone has to share the workload to operate it; there are so many PCR tests to analyze. As a result, the workload of those on duty has greatly increased.

Now that the COVID-19 pandemic seems to be waning (or at least becoming less virulent, and likely endemic), what makes you hopeful about the future of the medical laboratory profession in your country and around the world?

I have two expectations for the medical laboratory profession. The first is to bring separation and coexistence between humans and AI through active automation. This means separating what only humans can do from what AI can do. As a result, we will be able to perform our work more efficiently. For example, our daily checks on internal quality control often suffer from various shifts and trends. Correction through human trial and error takes time, but this is where I think AI will be faster and more efficient in pinpointing causes and finding solutions. On the other hand, we need to continue to improve our skills operating and maintaining equipment. This knowledge requires a high level of human expertise. The second is to devote the time that is saved by automation for research developing clinical tests. The research means the further pursuit of events that occur routinely, such as contradictory or unusual test results, the examination of reagents and so on. In the future, I hope there will be an increase in information exchange and cooperation in the medical laboratory profession around the world, especially through more academic conferences and training events.

What do you think the medical laboratory profession is going to look like post-pandemic? Will it be different? How will it be different?

I think the post-pandemic medical laboratory profession will change. It is assumed that hospital visits by patients will go down due to the big increase in online care. Therefore, specimen numbers and the amount of routine work for medical labs should also decrease. But as in the past, office work, reports and document production will increase. In order to provide better medical care, it is inevitable that there will be more cooperation with other co-medical staff than ever before. While medical laboratory scientists now almost always perform tests in hospital laboratories, the future may require us to visit outside wards and perform new tasks.

Has the pandemic had a negative effect on students wanting to pursue medical laboratory science as a profession?

Perhaps the pandemic has turned some students away from the medical field. They may not want to incur the risks involved. However, our jobs have been under a spotlight during the pandemic. The medical laboratory profession has had a considerable impact on healthcare and society as whole. Some students who have never considered entering the medical profession may decide that they would like to contribute to society in this way. Students already in the medical field may decide to specialize in a particular field (e.g., to genetic testing), based on experiences and revelations from the pandemic. I think it is also important for teachers to help and guide students. I hope the medical laboratory scientist demand increases in the future.

Why is an ASCP BOC credential still important in 2022?

By studying for ASCP BOC credentials, we can gain professional knowledge. I worked on a study guide for the International Technologist in Hematology, H(ASCP), and learned a lot of new information. The more knowledge I gained, the more motivated I became. It also gave me a desire to maintain the certification. It's great that people from different countries have the opportunity to get ASCP BOC credentials and improve their chances for work. The ASCP BOC professional qualifications is also a great way to advance one's career. I think it's important that professionals stay willing to learn new things and to keep themselves on the front line of the healthcare effort. For this purpose, ASCP BOC plays an important role.



JORDAN

Maher A. Sughayer, MD, FCAP

*Full Member and Chair, Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine,
King Hussein Cancer Center*

Chair, BOC Jordan Advisory Board

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected you personally and professionally?

Personally, many plans for investments and travel for vacation, like everybody else, were put off. Professionally, it opened several opportunities, including more free time to catch up on unfinished research and the ability to undertake new research related to the pandemic. It also paved the way for using virtual platforms for work meetings and educational conferences. This made it easier to participate in international conferences from the comfort of home. The pandemic also led to some changes in our day-to-day workflow at the laboratory, such as a decreased workload for routine tests, having to introduce complex new testing protocols and establish new policies and guidelines in response to the pandemic for employees and patients, and delaying expansion-related projects.

Now that the COVID-19 pandemic seems to be waning (or at least becoming less virulent, and likely endemic), what makes you hopeful about the future of the medical laboratory profession in your country and around the world?

The COVID-19 pandemic has raised awareness toward the need for a well-developed and properly invested-in diagnostic healthcare system, mainly laboratory. Hence, the need to leverage the laboratories' capacity in general and improve predictive testing is rapidly gaining momentum.

In addition, given the increasing growth of the online healthcare arena, laboratories should integrate online test booking systems and related digital services to enable remote diagnosis through digital pathology, as well as allow the reach of mass populations. The future of laboratory diagnostics will also be shaped through the use of point-of-care and home monitoring devices, bar codes, robots, artificial intelligence, and machine learning which will ensure faster operation, workflow efficiency, and better safety by minimizing human interface in laboratories.

Finally, the spirit of relatively open-source, easy-access remote learning through remote conferences, virtual courses, and workshops seems to have won the scene as more organizations and facilities are adopting it. The hope is for a continued effort in this direction.

What do you think the medical laboratory profession is going to look like post-pandemic? Will it be different? How will it be different?

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, laboratory management activities mainly remained inside of the laboratory; including reagent and instrument maintenance, daily quality assessment, error elimination, turnaround time reduction, etc. The previous management goal of laboratory medicine only aimed to maintain and improve the quality of accurate laboratory results.

However, since the COVID-19 outbreak, the most significant challenge has undoubtedly been the rapid expansion of demand for testing capabilities and rapidly launched laboratory-developed tests for urgent clinical application, which has resulted in laboratory medicine resource and personnel shortages.

Therefore, in my opinion, the post-pandemic era will focus on increased automation of laboratory tasks and workflows, spurred by their accelerated use out of necessity during the pandemic. Hospitals and laboratories will embrace innovations such as tracking-enabled systems for sample processing and QC checking, but these tools still require some manual participation from scientists. And it's that theme that will continue for the clinical laboratory—a hybrid approach where more advanced technologies require less frequent human intervention while also enhancing data quality with greater reproducibility. This will allow scientists to focus on more value-added activities, such as interpreting patient results, developing innovative clinical lab tests, and performing life-saving research.



JORDAN (CONTINUED)

Has the pandemic had a negative effect on students wanting to pursue medical laboratory science as a profession?

The answer to this question may be very subjective, given the variability in the laboratory sector in terms of workload differences and involvement in the pandemic response (i.e., scientists working in molecular labs were much more affected compared to those working in routine laboratories). Furthermore, the methodologies for fighting COVID-19 also varied greatly from country to country.

Having said that, in Jordan we experienced long periods of lockdown and strict regulations prohibiting any sort of activities in public and private; enforcing long-distance learning for universities, community colleges, and closing international exam centers for extended periods.

Additionally, most Jordanian hospitals and laboratories adopted a “minimizing staff contact plan,” where staff work for longer hours for one week, and then take the following week to two weeks off. The staff, therefore, had longer off days that they were able to use for exam preparation.

Why is an ASCP BOC credential still important in 2022?

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed medical knowledge weaknesses, gaps and limitations in the laboratory sector—especially in countries that do not have mandatory legislation for pre-licensure examinations for medical laboratory practitioners—indicating that there is a global need for competent healthcare providers.

In Jordan, although ASCP BOC certification is not mandatory, ASCP remains the most prestigious and locally valued certificate for medical laboratory scientists seeking distinction and career development, particularly because the country lacks a locally designed certification scheme for the profession. Thus, COVID-19 has only contributed to making ASCP BOC certification much more significant in Jordan and the region.



PHILIPPINES

Agnes B. Medenilla, BSMT, MS, MT(ASCP), RMT(PRC)

*College of Medical Technology, University of Perpetual Help
Chair, BOC Philippines Advisory Board*

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected you personally and professionally?

The individual experiences and lessons that we learned during the Covid-19 pandemic will be with us for the rest of our lives. The pandemic hit us when the whole world was seemingly unprepared for a menace that can spread so fast; it has surprised even sophisticated and advanced medical set-ups. Inadequacy of information on COVID-19 and its treatment led to all kinds of strategies in every country, each one hoping to be on the right track to save lives. It was frightening to hear news on the number of infections and number of deaths in different parts of the globe.

“Stay home and stay safe,” “quarantine,” “isolate,” “lockdown” —these were phrases we never heard before, but they became common lingo in our country. Roads looked different with the absence or limitation of public transport; people walked with face masks and face shields.

Communication with friends and relatives was through social media. The foremost concern of everyone was survival of family, relatives, and friends. All of a sudden, it was a different world, a different life! It didn't seem real at first! But acceptance of this new environment slowly sunk in, and resilience has taken over. We have learned to adapt amidst changing COVID-19 situations and country protocols. We have learned to fight for life, understand the importance of those around us, find happiness for each new day, and consider everyday a blessing God has given. We have learned to look forward to the end of this COVID-19 pandemic.



PHILIPPINES (CONTINUED)

Professionally, the pandemic has strengthened my respect and pride of the medical laboratory profession. Medical laboratory scientists are forever on the frontlines. Across the Philippines, the large volumes of COVID-19 tests and the long hours needed for molecular biology procedures did not keep our professionals away from their responsibilities.

Now that the COVID-19 pandemic seems to be waning (or at least becoming less virulent, and likely endemic), what makes you hopeful about the future of the medical laboratory profession in your country and around the world?

The performance of medical technologists in this pandemic and the response of the profession to the demands of testing for COVID-19, regardless of the large volumes of work and technology changes, made me hopeful for the future of the medical laboratory profession. Our country and the whole world need a profession such as this in good and bad times.

What do you think the medical laboratory profession is going to look like post-pandemic? Will it be different? How will it be different?

The experiences we have had over the past two years will have a huge influence on our activities in the post-pandemic world. Molecular biology and new technologies will be given a bigger space in routine laboratory operations. Improved facilities for communication and social connectivity through online processes will be established for employees and patients. Safety protocols will be enhanced and guidelines used during the pandemic will be part of the new normal.

Has the pandemic had a negative effect on students wanting to pursue medical laboratory science as a profession?

The work of medical laboratory scientists was highlighted and was seen by the incoming generation of students. It might have caused some negative effects, but overall the effect was positive. As most students were inspired to see frontline laboratory professionals working tirelessly to serve their country and community during the pandemic. Additionally, laboratory professionals were seen with an array of tubes and new automated laboratory machines. This can create curiosity and idealism to students who, themselves, are dreaming of becoming medical laboratory scientists.

Why is an ASCP BOC credential still important in 2022?

The ASCP BOC credential is important in 2022. The medical laboratory professionals opt to be at par always with their international peers. Having the ASCP BOC credential fulfills this goal. This will persist not only in 2022 but also in the years to come.



SOUTH KOREA

Hyo Chan Kang

*Professor, Department of Biomedical Laboratory Science, Daegu Haany University
Chair, BOC Korea Advisory Board*

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected you personally and professionally?

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about many changes worldwide in the past two years. First of all, wearing a mask has become natural in public places and has brought many restrictions on daily life. In South Korea, recently, gatherings of more than six people at a restaurant were not allowed. In schools, the situation is similar. When COVID-19 was severe, in-person learning was replaced with online learning, which had a great impact on students' ability to study. As the number of COVID-19 infected people dramatically increased, so did number of COVID-19 tests, which had the effect of overwhelming medical laboratories large and small due to the shortage of medical laboratory professionals. However, the situation is improving little by little, according to the South Korean government's COVID-19 prevention policy, and due to the dedication of medical professionals.



SOUTH KOREA (CONTINUED)

Now that the COVID-19 pandemic seems to be waning (or at least becoming less virulent, and likely endemic), what makes you hopeful about the future of the medical laboratory profession in your country and around the world?

Early last year, as the COVID-19 pandemic worsened, I re-read *The Plague*, a novel by Albert Camus. As we all know, this novel is about the outbreak of the Plague in Oran, a coastal town in Algeria, which shuts down the city and the residents try to escape from the Plague's fears. The Plague, also known as the Black Death, is a terrifying disease that occurred in medieval Europe and claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. Even in this novel, the Plague has receded and the city has re-opened, but the medical staff are still taking care of the sick in a state of exhaustion. I think the current COVID-19 pandemic is the same. Even if the COVID-19 pandemic gets better and becomes an endemic disease, it is thought that the difficult situation will continue for the time being for not only the medical system, but also the medical laboratory profession. However, due to the pandemic of infectious diseases, the importance of diagnostic tests has become more prominent, so the future of the laboratory profession is hopeful.

What do you think the medical laboratory profession is going to look like post-pandemic? Will it be different? How will it be different?

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become clear to the lay community that medical laboratory professionals conduct COVID-19 testing. Prior to the pandemic, a layperson would have little knowledge of who was responsible for screening for rapid or accurate diagnostic tests. Now, due to the general public's increased awareness of the important contributions of medical laboratory professionals, laboratory professionals have been empowered. Laboratory professionals can now use this power toward advancing their careers, and advancing the profession.

Has the pandemic had a negative effect on students wanting to pursue medical laboratory science as a profession?

COVID-19 has brought many changes to our daily life. The pandemic fundamentally changed instruction at schools and universities. The most significant change being the switch to online learning. Due to COVID-19, students' right to learn has been violated, and the quality of education has also been lowered. In particular, in the medical laboratory science program, practice is important, but online learning made it impossible to practice properly. In my university, until last year, theoretical classes were conducted online, and the experimental class was conducted with a cross-class method (half of students joined offline and the others were online) that reduced the number of students in order to comply with social distancing requirements. However, this year, the university's policy is to conduct in-person classes as a rule, but it is closely monitoring the number of COVID-19 infections. In general, I believe that the right to learn has been violated due to the limitations of online learning.

Why is an ASCP BOC credential still important in 2022?

I have been running an online site (<https://cafe.daum.net/ASCP>) in South Korea for promotion of the ASCP BOC international credential examinations since 2007. The number of members on the site has reached 5,000, and recently more students have been signing up to become members of the site. In particular, the number of undergraduate students is increasing. This is because many universities in South Korea are now conducting training programs for ASCP BOC International credential examinations, and the pass rate for these students (once they end up taking an ASCP BOC international examination) is high. Many of these students take the examination in order to advance their careers or with the intent of (someday) working in the U.S. Generally, students and practitioner interest in South Korea continues to rise. Therefore, it can be said that ASCP BOC certification is still important in 2022.



TAIWAN

Yao-Lung Tsai, PhD

*Clinical Laboratory Director, Sin-Lau Hospital
BOC Taiwan Advisory Board*

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected you personally and professionally?

The impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on the laboratory has resulted in upgrading safety protections, an increased workload, the reduction of the production capacity per unit time of medical examiners due to wearing and taking off of isolation gowns, the control of hospital portals affecting the flow of outpatient testing, increases in waiting time for blood draws, and laboratory manpower arrangement redefinition, etcetera. Those changes from time consumption of PCR performances and infection control policies have affected me, and many other laboratory professionals, personally and professionally.

Now that the COVID-19 pandemic seems to be waning (or at least becoming less virulent, and likely endemic), what makes you hopeful about the future of the medical laboratory profession in your country and around the world?

COVID-19 seems to be waning (decreasing the severity of the disease), but it is getting closer to humans and will inevitably turn into a seasonal, regional infectious disease in the future. Fear and prevention of the virus will inevitably change the modes of medical care. For example, the routinization of infection control, the general improvement of personal protection, and even the behavior of patients seeking medical treatment may also change. Laboratories can use the experiences of dealing with the epidemic to establish a set of routine operation modes. In addition to paying attention to laboratory production and time consumption, laboratory safety should be seriously faced, which should be the direction of future laboratory changes.

What do you think the medical laboratory profession is going to look like post-pandemic? Will it be different? How will it be different?

Molecular diagnosis should be the main focus of the laboratory in the future. Those could include the introduction of molecular diagnosis technology for every laboratory, establishment of a rapid, automated and large-scale production capacity laboratory, using robotic arms instead of manual operations, development of a closed system for medical examination performances, etc. Those pictures should be the situation of medical laboratories in the post-epidemic era.

Has the pandemic had a negative effect on students wanting to pursue medical laboratory science as a profession?

The epidemic situation is not necessarily a negative impact on students' investment on laboratory careers. In Taiwan, ensuring that one-third of the COVID-19 PCR test costs are allocated to test-related personnel has greatly increased the salary of medical examiners, and medical test work is relatively more important in the entire medical system. The improvements of various benefits, safety protections and the medical examiners' status in medical system should attract more medical technical students to enter this market.

Why is an ASCP BOC credential still important in 2022?

The norms and standards of ASCP BOC are still the gold standard for medical inspection operations in the world, especially in the era of epidemic. Any negligence may cause serious contagious consequences. Therefore, to strictly abide the laboratory's safe operation rules is necessary for laboratory survival. ASCP BOC is still very important in 2022.

Is there anything else you would like to share about the medical laboratory profession post-COVID-19?

In order to avoid the contamination of specimens and the spread of diseases, laboratories using a high degree of robotic arms instead of manual operations and developing a closed operating system for confined spaces are strongly suggested. The medical examiner only monitors from the remote end, and the specimen must be disinfected before touching it. This is a mode of safe laboratory works, saving manpower, efficiently, and low risk of infections.



UGANDA

Emmanuel Oluka, MBA

*Uganda Advisory Board Coordinator, Laboratory Team Leader
BOC Uganda Advisory Board*

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected you personally and professionally?

During the COVID-19 pandemic, I have had limited interactions with people both in public and private places, with keen attention to adherence to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). I had keen attention to getting up-to-date information on how the pandemic was progressing and affecting the world despite being somewhat isolated. I kept away from public places with limited interactions with the communities. That meant a change of social and cultural lifestyle.

On a professional note, I realized how important laboratory workers are in contributing to the fight against such pandemics. I also realized how important government authorities are in implementing policies and procedures that contribute to disease control.

Now that the COVID-19 pandemic seems to be waning (or at least becoming less virulent, and likely endemic), what makes you hopeful about the future of the medical laboratory profession in your country and around the world?

Government authorities played a great role in providing education to the population on the methods of disease control in order to provoke a quick and effective response to help control the pandemic. This means both laboratory and public relations strategies are key in implementing disease control and treatment.

What do you think the medical laboratory profession is going to look like post-pandemic? Will it be different? How will it be different?

In order to improve the medical laboratory field in my country, laboratory professionals must closely and effectively work with government authorities who have the power and capacity to assist in implementing our policies, procedures, training demands, and any issues of public health concern. Laboratory professionals must be involved in national policymaking projects and programs that can be imputed into national laws. We must advise governments to invest in building better-equipped laboratories that can handle future pandemics.

Certification and investment in continuing education should be prioritized for effective diagnosis of diseases. The medical laboratory profession should prioritize training more laboratory workers. Laboratories need high-level automation to handle larger volumes of samples in case of outbreaks of future pandemics. Nations should focus on building research and innovation institutions with certified professionals in order to sustain and improve response to disease outbreaks.

Why is an ASCP BOC credential still important in 2022?

ASCP BOC credentials are essential to producing highly knowledgeable and skilled Laboratory workers that provide expert and reliable diagnosis of diseases.



UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (U.A.E.)

Rana Nabulsi, MSc, CPHQ

*Elite Quality & Safety Consultancy and Training LLC
Chair, BOC United Arab Emirates Advisory Board*

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected you personally and professionally?

Professionally, I gained a number governance and management opportunities as a result of the pandemic. Personally, I was able to build strong alliances in the public and private sectors in the U.A.E., and I was inspired to pursue my Executive MBA at INSEAD.

Now that the COVID-19 pandemic seems to be waning (or at least becoming less virulent, and likely endemic), what makes you hopeful about the future of the medical laboratory profession in your country and around the world?

Our medical laboratory scientists make me very hopeful. They are the frontline army in the war against COVID-19. Testing SARS-CoV2 by PCR was the only golden method to diagnose COVID-19 disease (before clinical evaluation and radiology). Testing with high capacity and fast turnaround times saved the U.A.E. from a high mortality rate and a high infection rate.

What do you think the medical laboratory profession is going to look like post-pandemic? Will it be different? How will it be different?

It will be different. Governments and the lay community now have a much greater appreciation for the laboratory science profession. Additionally, advanced technological innovations in virology and molecular technologies, such as LAMP & CRISPR, will make the laboratory of the future very different from the laboratory of 2022. Digital pathology and smart application in lab medicine will also play a big role in the 21st century laboratory.

Other changes that we are likely to see post-pandemic are that lab science will become more visible in healthcare systems worldwide, molecular genetics and virology are likely to become more attractive, and there will be more opportunities for education and employment.

Why is an ASCP BOC credential still important in 2022?

Today, and in the future, ASCP BOC will continue to distinguish competent laboratory scientists with standardized certification worldwide.



UPDATES TO ONLINE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR APPLICANTS

Beginning in March 16, 2022, those applying for certification or qualification will be required to upload completed training and experience documentation forms, as well as Letters of Authenticity, electronically within the application itself. Documents must be uploaded before an application can be submitted.

Applicants are still required to request official transcripts be sent to the ASCP Board of Certification (BOC) from their educational institution. The applicant must note which institution(s) will be sending an official transcript to the ASCP BOC.

Program Directors will continue to verify a student's completion of a program through the EEV; there are no changes to this process.



TRANSITION OF EXISTING MEDICAL TECHNOLOGIST MT(ASCP) TO MEDICAL LABORATORY SCIENTIST MLS(ASCP)

The ASCP Board of Certification (BOC) Board of Governors (BOG) created a Nomenclature Taskforce in November of 2021 to make recommendations for gaining acceptance and adoption of a unified title of Medical Laboratory Scientist (MLS). This group was formed after the ASCP BOC and American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science (ASCLS) published the position paper [Standardizing the Professional Title of Medical Laboratory Professionals: A Position Paper of American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science \(ASCLS\) and the American Society for Clinical Pathology Board of Certification \(ASCP BOC\)](#).

Taskforce members include Kathy Doig, PhD, MLS(ASCP)^{CM}SH^{CM} (ASCLS representative); Bonnie Rubin, MBA, MHA, MT(ASCP) (CLMA representative); Clarke Sinclair (Human Resources representative); and BOG members Sue Johnson, MSTM, MT(ASCP)SBB^{CM} (Chair); Will Finn, MD, MASCP; Kathy Finnegan, MS, MT(ASCP)SH^{CM}; Susan Harrington, PhD, D(ABMM), MASCP, MLS(ASCP)^{CM}; Linda Smith, PhD, MLS(ASCP)^{CM}BB^{CM}; Elaine Francis, EdD; and Patricia Tanabe, MPA, MLS(ASCP)^{CM}.

The Nomenclature Taskforce and the BOC BOG agreed that one goal critical to standardization is to change BOC credentials, MT(ASCP)/MT(ASCPⁱ). BOC staff are working on a plan to transition the existing credential of Medical Technologist [MT(ASCP)/MT(ASCPⁱ)] to Medical Laboratory Scientist [MLS(ASCP)/MLS(ASCPⁱ)]. This will mean that anyone with a MT(ASCP) or MT(ASCPⁱ) credential will be transitioned to MLS(ASCP) or MLS(ASCPⁱ) by the end of 2022. The BOC will be reaching out to the affected certificants, and there will be communications regarding details on the transition on the website and in social media.

Another move to change the use of “technologists” came from the CT Examination Committee who, upon approval from the BOG, changed the name of the committee to the Cytology Examination Committee and the certification exam titles to Specialist in Cytology (SCT) and Cytologist (CT).

With these changes, it is important to remember the everyday language that is used to refer to medical laboratory professionals. Name changes in the profession will require everyone to use the terms **medical laboratory scientist** or **cytologist**. It may also require politely correcting others who unknowingly use the terms *Lab techs/Lab technicians/Bench tech* or *Medical technologist/Medical technology/Med tech*. An important benchmark in the journey for increased respect is to have one name and everyone is encouraged to start now.

I AM A MT(ASCP)...

...when does my credential transition to MLS(ASCP)?

You may begin using the MLS(ASCP) credential immediately. Please note that a formal verification of your ASCP certification will continue to reflect MT(ASCP) in the ASCP BOC database until the transition process is completed.

...when will the process be completed?

The process is expected to be completed by the end of 2022.

...how will I be notified?

Notifications will be sent by email and postal service to the addresses currently on file in your ASCP customer record.

...will I be sent a new wall certificate that says MLS(ASCP)?

No, new wall certificates will not be sent. If, after the transition, you wish to order a new certificate, additional information can be found on the ASCP website at [Verify Credentials/General Information/Replacement Wall Certificate](#).

...will I be required to do CMP?

No, CMP will continue to be voluntary for those ASCP certified prior to 2004.

CREDENTIAL MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE UPDATES

The Credential Maintenance Committee (CMC) has the responsibility for overseeing the Credential Maintenance Program (CMP). The program helps ensure that the continuing education activities of practitioners will help them remain current, encourage them to follow ethical and safety principles to protect the patient, and encourage professional development. During the last year there have been several significant activities including a new requirement for 1 CMP point in medical ethics and the opportunity to use COVID-related activities to be used towards the CMP requirements.

New in 2023: 1 CMP Point In Medical Ethics for All Certification Categories

Medical ethics is the foundation for all aspects of laboratory sciences and patient care. CMP requirements have been revised to include 1 CMP point in medical ethics for all certification categories with certification cycles expiring in January 2023 moving forward (regardless of when you submit your completed online declaration form). This will NOT increase the overall total number of CMP points required for your category.

Topics that can be included under ethics are varied and may include presentations or training related to:

- HIPAA, FERPA or other confidentiality issues
- Compliance
- CAP Inspector Training
- IRB
- Cultural sensitivity
- DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion)
- Sexual harassment/microaggressions
- Tissue procurement and banking
- Use of controlled materials

Complete information can be found at this link: www.ascp.org/cmp.

CMP COVID-Related CE Claim Form Extended Through December 2022

Increased workloads and limited availability of in-person training or conferences during this time, may have affected practitioners' ability to obtain continuing education credits for recertification. The ASCP Board of Certification (BOC) has approved the use of COVID-related activities performed within the normal scope of work or outside normal job duties for up to 12 CMP points/CEUs toward recertification. To date nearly 400 individuals have taken advantage of this opportunity by completing a [CMP COVID-related CE Claim Form](#). This time-limited opportunity has been extended for an additional year. The form may be used for COVID-related activities completed within the time frame of March 1, 2020 through December 31, 2022. Information about the opportunity and a special COVID-related CE Claim Form can be found [here](#).

LOOKING FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO GET MORE INVOLVED IN THE MEDICAL LABORATORY PROFESSION?

The ASCP Board of Certification (BOC) is looking for volunteers to serve on BOC examination committees and qualification work groups, beginning in 2023. The BOC accepts applications from prospective volunteers throughout the year. All applications are reviewed by BOC staff and respective Exam Committees or Work Groups.

Much effort goes into determining what characteristics are needed to complement the existing committee composition. The composition of each committee is reviewed annually to ensure diversity, including position title (educator, bench, physician), area of expertise, type of institution where the volunteer works, size of the institution, geographic region, etc.

If you are interested, please submit an [application](#) which can be found on the BOC website. If you do not see the position you are looking for, feel free to submit an application nonetheless, as they are kept on file for one year.

ASCP Board of Certification 2021 Examination Statistics for ASCP Credential

EXAM TYPE	FIRST YEAR CERTIFIED	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	RANGE OF SCORES	TOTAL # TAKING EXAM	TOTAL PASS	TOTAL FAIL	1ST TIME CAAHEP/NAACLS PASS	2021 CERTIFIED
MLS	1931	462	114	100 939	5,411	3,741 69%	1,670 31%	3,021 79%	277,380
MLT	1969	483	133	148 966	3,087	2,214 72%	873 28%	1,957 78%	106,250
PBT	1989	550	119	163 959	1,452	1,309 90%	143 10%	246 93%	69,565
BB	1983	472	120	182 849	103	77 75%	26 25%		3,631
SBB	1954	413	112	147 687	179	99 55%	80 45%	58 73%	6,072
C	1948	372	103	100 762	245	95 39%	150 61%		5,758
SC	1954	421	112	188 664	45	25 56%	20 44%		1,886
CT	1957	526	120	157 806	130	111 85%	19 15%	105 88%	16,475
SCT	1959	535	62	394 624	13	12 92%	1 8%		739
CG	2009	441	101	174 676	145	99 68%	46 32%	23 74%	4,702
DLM	1989	398	81	190 618	49	23 47%	26 53%		1,135
DPT	2003	444	93	306 588	19	14 74%	5 26%		430
H	1971	464	126	140 736	101	70 69%	31 31%		4,037
SH	1968	441	107	273 690	36	20 56%	16 44%		2,836
HT	1948	460	131	100 817	572	391 68%	181 32%	212 81%	26,733
HTL	1980	442	103	100 749	423	295 70%	128 30%	113 85%	5,575
M	1948	417	111	139 754	256	146 57%	110 43%		6,962
SM	1953	429	100	243 677	61	33 54%	28 46%		3,358
MB	2003	452	117	100 837	890	612 69%	278 31%	71 92%	6,371
SMB ¹	2018	290	96	119 720	69	4 6%	65 94%		19
MLA	2016	411	127	220 749	63	29 46%	34 54%	1 50%	205
PA	2005	573	101	337 818	178	169 95%	9 5%	164 96%	2,858
SCYM	2017	441	126	178 689	47	28 60%	19 40%		1,034
Other ²									25,532
TOTAL					13,574	9,616 71%	3,958 29%	5,971 80%	579,543

¹ SMB began administering January 2018
Blue shading denotes all candidates who took exam through CAAHEP/NAACLS eligibility routes.
Rev date: 01/18/2022

CLINICAL LABORATORY EDUCATORS CONFERENCE UPDATE

By Kristin Blake, MA

The ASCP Board of Certification (BOC) Board of Governors Chair (BOG) and the BOC staff had a wonderful opportunity to meet with the program directors at the Clinical Laboratory Educators Conference (CLEC) March 14-16, 2022 in Denver, Colorado. During the conference, Susan Graham, MS, MT(ASCP)SH^{CM}, chair of the ASCP BOC BOG provided an update on BOC activities.

Pat Tanabe, MPA, MLS(ASCP)^{CM}, ASCP BOC Executive Director, and Kristin Blake, MA, Director, BOC Operations, staffed the BOC booth, answering questions and distributing paper copies of the updated *Program Director's Guide to Certification*. For those unable to attend CLEC, the guide is available online [here](#).

The BOC raffled off several copies of the new interactive practice exam to five lucky winners. Included in the drawing were three copies of the *BOC Interactive Practice Examinations*, one copy of the *BOC Interactive Practice Exam - Phlebotomy*, and one copy of the *BOC Interactive Practice Exam - Histotechnology*. We enjoyed meeting and talking with program directors and educators. Thank you for visiting us at the BOC booth. We look forward to seeing you next March in New Orleans!

2022

MAY		
ISBER	May 17 – 20	Atlanta, GA
JUNE		
ISAC	June 3 – 7	Philadelphia, PA
ASM	June 9 – 13	Washington, DC
ASCLS/AGT	June 26 – 30	Grand Rapids, MI
JULY		
AACC	July 24 – 28	Chicago, IL
SEPTEMBER		
ASCP	September 7 – 9	Chicago, IL
AAPA	September 18 – 22	Minneapolis, MN
OCTOBER		
AABB	October 1 – 4	Orlando, FL
NSH	October 14 – 19	Reno, NV
ICCS	October 21 – 25	Montreal, Quebec
NOVEMBER		
ASC	November 15 – 20	Baltimore, MD
DECEMBER		
ASH	December 10 – 13	New Orleans, LA
MARCH		
ASCLS	March 2 – 4 (CLEC)	New Orleans, LA

2023

Refer to the individual organization's website for meeting details.



Elizabeth Wilson

BOC STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Elizabeth “Liz” Wilson has been working for the ASCP Board of Certification (BOC) for almost a year, come this May. Starting as a temporary employee, Liz joined the staff as CMP Evaluator in October 2021. Having been hired during the pandemic, Liz completed her training via Zoom and Teams.

She says that “while it has been wonderful working from home, I do enjoy coming into the office to see and interact with the smiling faces of my co-workers.” Liz grew up in suburban Robbins and now lives in Chicago. She has a background in clerical administration and customer service.

Outside of the office, she loves working with her hands. Liz refers to herself as a “craftonista,” a term she coined to reflect her love of sewing, card-making, clay modeling, jewelry making, and working with all types of fibers.

During the first year of the COVID 19 pandemic, Liz learned the skill of mask-making. She began by making masks for family and friends and was soon providing masks for essential workers at a local courthouse. The most challenging part of that project was obtaining the cotton fabric and quarter-inch elastic. She says it was gratifying work, knowing that she was helping to keep people safe.

Liz is most passionate about teaching adults and children the crafting techniques she has learned, especially sewing as the creative possibilities are endless. In her free time, she enjoys watching “how to” videos on YouTube and searching Pinterest for more craft ideas.

She also loves going to thrift stores with her daughter and sister. Liz loves all things vintage and finds it satisfying to discuss who found the greatest treasure each trip.

Looking ahead, Liz would love to travel more. She has enjoyed watching the sunrise from a hotel room in Virginia Beach and walking along the coastline. In the future, she would love to go to the Hawaii or the Caribbean Islands to experience the clear blue water and white sands.

For now, she’ll settle for armchair traveling Europe with Rick Steves, watching the Rick Steves’ Europe TV program on PBS. With this kind of travel, she doesn’t have to spend a lot of money, she says, with a laugh!



**Amy Spiczka, MS,
HTL(ASCP)^{CM}SCT, MB^{CM}**



**Patricia A. Tanabe,
MPH, MLS(ASCP)^{CM}**

THE ASCP BOC WELCOMES NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN JULY 2022

Amy Spiczka, MS, HTL(ASCP)^{CM}SCT, MB^{CM} has been selected as the new Executive Director of the ASCP Board of Certification (BOC) effective July 1, 2022. Ms. Spiczka has served as the Senior Director for Quality & Patient Safety with ASCP since 2018. She will assume the position following Patricia A. Tanabe, MPH, MLS(ASCP)^{CM} who retires on June 30, 2022. Ms. Tanabe has worked in the ASCP BOC for 26 years and has served as Executive Director since January 1, 2011. During her tenure as Executive Director she has overseen the development of six new certifications and two new qualifications. Ms. Tanabe was also instrumental in the ASCP BOC being the only laboratory professional certification agency to receive ANSI National Accreditation Board (ANAB) accreditation, furthering the BOC vision to be the gold standard in global certification for all laboratory professionals.

The ASCP Board of Certification welcomes Ms. Spiczka and extends its deepest gratitude to Ms. Tanabe.



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American Society for Clinical Pathology (ASCP)

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American Society of Cytopathology (ASC)

American Society for Microbiology (ASM)

Clinical Laboratory Management Association (CLMA)

National Society for Histotechnology (NSH)

Collaborating Societies

AACC

American Society of Hematology (ASH)

The mission of the ASCP Board of Certification (BOC) is to provide excellence in certification of laboratory professionals on behalf of patients worldwide.