



The Early Years: Recognition of Laboratory Technicians through ASCP

The very beginning of the Board of Certification started with the formation of the American Society of Clinical Pathologists in 1922. As Lall G. Montgomery, MD, stated in his article, “A Short History of the Registry of Medical Technologists of the American Society of Clinical Pathologists,” published in 1970, “It is apparent as one scans the records, however, that before these first steps were taken the ideas had been developing, not only for the formation of a special society of clinical pathologists, but also the closely related idea was that there should be some clear definition to differentiate the workers in clinical laboratories whose work was primarily technical, from those who were physicians.”

The first mention of the need to identify the “qualified technician” on a national scale was contained in a paper written in 1918 by John Kolmer, MD, as the United States entered World War I. Another factor in the need for technicians was legislation passed by the State of Pennsylvania requiring “all hospitals and institutions, particularly those receiving state aid, to install and equip an adequate laboratory and to employ a laboratory technician on a full-time basis.” A technical training course for training laboratory workers was developed at the Philadelphia Polyclinic, one of the first of its kind.

In April 1926, at the ASCP meeting, a resolution was passed instructing the president to appoint a “Committee on the Registration of Laboratory Technicians” composed of four members. The function of the Committee was to “define a technician; possible different classes of technicians and then proceed to make it known that we have such a bureau which will undoubtedly bring forth many applications for registration.” According to the original draft of the “Rules and Regulations of the American Registry of Medical Technicians,” the Registry would be known as the Registry of Technicians of the American Society of Clinical Pathologists and would be directed by a Board of Registry of six members appointed by ASCP. The Board would establish minimum standards for educational and technical qualifications, receive applications for registry and issue a certificate of registration to those who met the minimum standards. Schools which offered an acceptable course in laboratory training would be registered by the Board. The first report from the Committee was presented by Dr. Kano Ikeda at the New Willard Hotel in Washington, D.C.

By 1928, 350 applications for registration were received (80% female). In the Committee’s report to the Board, the Committee recommended:

“(1) the creation of a permanent Board of Registry with functions, (a) to conduct a Registry, (b) to issue certificates of registration, (c) to conduct a placement bureau, (d) to investigate and register schools of laboratory technicians acceptable to the Board of Registry, and

(2) the adoption of the classification of Laboratory Technician and Medical Technologist, based upon the minimum standards of qualifications as defined by the ASCP.”

The Board of Registry was officially formed in 1928, with the adoption of these recommendations. The first chair was Phillip Hillkowitz, MD (1928-1940).