



Technician Initiatives and Development: Moving Beyond New Roles to Leadership

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Learning Objectives

- Analyze case management studies business models to support advanced roles for pharmacy technicians.
- Evaluate resources for pharmacy technician development models that support pharmacy services in various care settings.
- Assess strategic planning considerations for technician workforce and future roles pharmacy leaders should consider for advancement of technicians.



Technician Job Descriptions

Basic Technician

- Unit Dose
- Automation
- Sterile Products
- Chemo
- Delivery

Advanced Technician

- Controlled Substances Diversion
- Supervisors/Managers
- Tech-Check-Tech
- Medication History



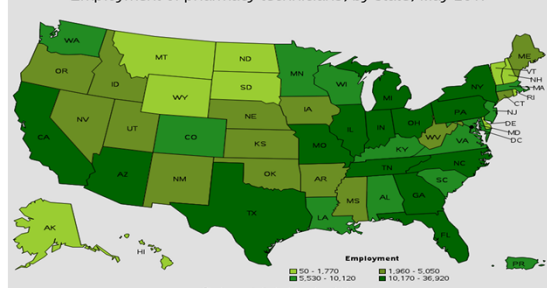
Market and Trends

- **Pharmacy Technicians**
 - 402,500 jobs in 2016
- **Technician Employers**
 - 52% Retail
 - 16% Hospital
 - 10% General merchandise
 - 8% Food and Beverage
- **Job Outlook, 2016-26**
 - 12% (faster than average)
- **Employment Change**
 - 47,600 additional jobs from 2016-2026

Bureau of Labor and Statistics <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/pharmacy-technicians.htm>



Employment of pharmacy technicians, by state, May 2017



Bureau of Labor and Statistics <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/pharmacy-technicians.htm>



Registration Requirements

- **High School Diploma or GED**
 - All states
- **Certification**
 - Varies by state
 - Varies by employer
- **Accredited Training Program**
 - Varies by state
 - Varies by employer



Education/Certification

- **Recognized Certifications**
 - The Pharmacy Technician Certification Board
 - National Healthcareer Association
 - Specialty Certifications
 - Sterile Products
- **ASHP Accredited Training Programs**
 - Standardized criteria
- **College Training Programs**
 - 6 month – 1 year certificate or diploma
 - Two-year associate degree in pharmacy technology
 - Bachelors of Science in Pharmaceutical Sciences
- **On-Line Programs**
- **On the Job Training**

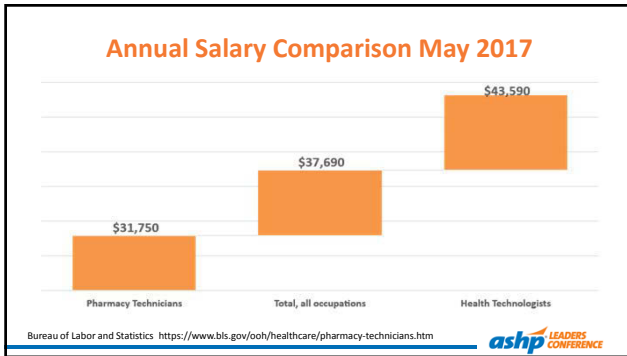


Salaries

- **Annual wages for Pharmacy Technicians**
 - Hospitals; state, local, and private \$36,710
 - General merchandise stores \$31,320
 - Food and beverage stores \$29,860
 - Pharmacies and drug stores \$29,500

Bureau of Labor and Statistics <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/pharmacy-technicians.htm>





Opportunities

- **Standardize Education/Certification**
 - Increase responsibilities
- **Pharmacy Technician Career versus job**
 - Create opportunities for advancement
 - Retention
- **Advance Pharmacy and Pharmacist services**

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Barriers

- Market demand growing faster than technicians entering the job market
- Non- standardized registration requirements
- Non-standardized technician allowed duties
- Non-standardize formal training and certification
- Wages
- Culture

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1) STANDARD TECHNICIAN TRAINING IS ESSENTIAL TO DEFINE AND EXPAND THE ROLE OF THE PHARMACY TECHNICIAN
- 2) PHARMACY TECHNICIANS NEED TO BE KNOWN AS A KEY COMPONENT OF THE PHARMACY TEAM
- 3) ADVANCING THE ROLE OF THE PHARMACY TECHNICIAN WILL ADVANCE THE ROLE OF THE PHARMACIST



References

1. Bureau of Labor and Statistics
<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/pharmacy-technicians.htm>
2. Ashlee N. Mattingly, Pharm.D. ASHP Entry-level practice requirements of pharmacy technicians across the United States: A review. *Am J Health-Syst Pharm.* 2018; 75:1057-63





Technician Career Ladder Optimization and Leadership Development

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The University of Kansas Health System



Objectives

Describe efforts to optimize an existing technician career ladder to better suit the needs of the department and workforce

Discuss strategies to elevate technicians outside of the career ladder and to develop leadership skills



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Audience Poll

Do you have an established career ladder for technicians at your organization?



Audience Poll

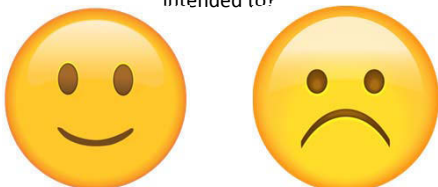
How many different levels are built into your technician career ladder?

- 2
- 3
- 4
- > 4



Audience Poll

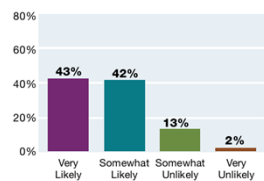
Do you feel your career ladder accomplishes what it is intended to?



Where Are We Going?¹

- Increased focus on professionalizing technician roles
 - Efforts to develop uniform national standards for entry-level technicians²
- Leadership development is needed
 - Technicians supervise other technicians in 1/3 of hospitals³

In 75% of health systems, entry-level pharmacy technicians will be supervised by senior pharmacy technicians.



Where Are We Going?¹

In your department's strategic plan, give priority to achieving a high level of professionalization, job satisfaction, and career commitment of technician staff.

Recognize that this will probably require a formal career ladder that specifies how technicians can advance in their responsibilities and compensation.

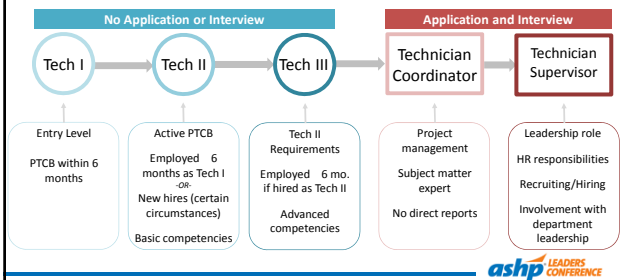


Site Background

- Pharmacy Enterprise
 - 430 Employees
 - 164 Technicians
 - 20 Locations
 - 7 Divisions
- Technician Career Ladder in place since 2005
- Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB) Certification Required



Existing Career Ladder Overview



Advancement Requirements

- General Requirements
 - Advancement requests were evaluated any time during the year
 - Technicians could not advance more than once per 12 months
- Human Resource Requirements
 - No written corrective action within previous 12 months
 - At supervisor's discretion if employee had verbal counseling within previous 90 days
- Competency Requirements
 - Area specific competencies
- Employee Transfers
 - If transferring to a new area – all competencies must be completed within 6 months to maintain current level



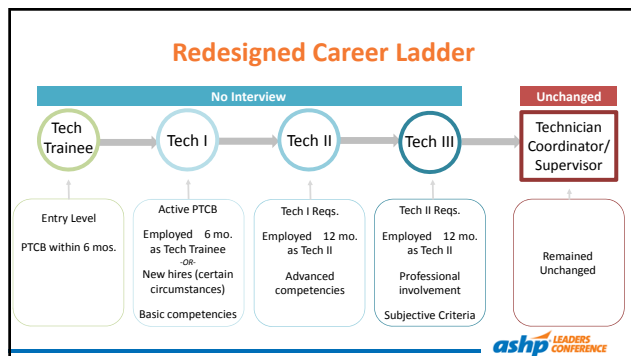
Existing Career Ladder Challenges

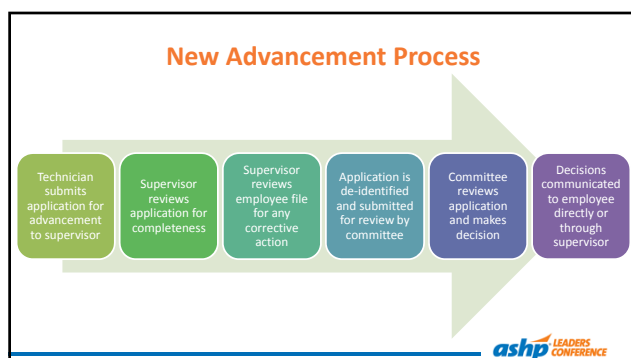


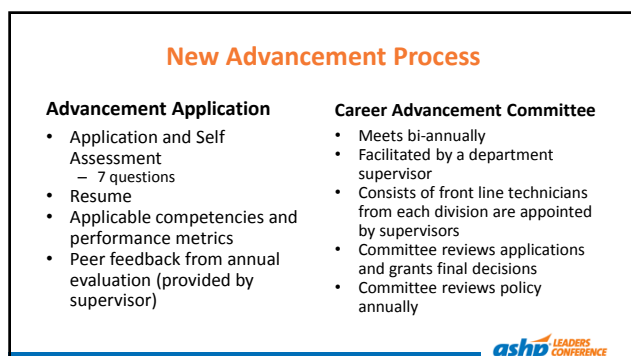
Career Ladder Redesign

- Process
 - Owner/Facilitator
 - PGY2 HSPA Resident
- Stakeholders
 - Technician leadership
 - Senior department leadership
- Timeline
 - 10 months
- Recommendations
 - Add an additional rung to the ladder
 - Make advancement about performance in addition to competencies
 - Objectify the subjective



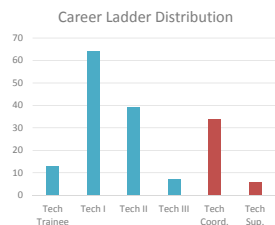






TUKHS Technician Data

- First Career Advancement Committee held in May 2018
 - 18 Applications
 - 7 Approved
- Lessons Learned
 - More emphasis needs placed on application questions
 - Plan to provide examples of good applications
 - Need to set time limit to discuss each application



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Continued Challenges

- Comparing technicians across different sites is still difficult
- Importance of professional involvement vs amount worked
 - Should filling open shifts carry the same weight as professional involvement?
 - Financial barriers?
- Narrowing of pay differences between rungs of the ladder

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Life Beyond the Ladder

Excellent Employee



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Strong Leader



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Technician Leadership Development






People

Training & Education

Clear Expectations & Support

Lean Principles & Coaching Kata

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Technician Leadership Development






People

- Encourage technicians to take ownership of their career path – what are their goals?
- Involve front-line technicians with leadership potential in department projects/meetings
- Assign small projects as “trial” to evaluate skills necessary in leadership positions

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Technician Leadership Development



Training & Education

- Identify and address knowledge deficits
 - Internal leadership development series
 - Excel courses
 - Audit courses through university
 - Topic discussions
 - Journal clubs
- Encourage involvement in professional organizations



Technician Leadership Development



Clear Expectations & Support

- Establish ownership of their new role
- Short-term vs long-term involvement
 - High touch initially and with new situations
 - Gradually allow for more independence as confidence and skill sets grow
- Provide real-time feedback



Technician Leadership Development



Lean Principles & “Coaching Kata”

- Daily and Weekly Status Reports
- “Kata” – practiced, patterned movements
- 5 Questions:
 - Target condition
 - Actual condition
 - Obstacles
 - Next steps
 - Lessons learned



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1) **CAREER LADDERS CAN BE UTILIZED TO PROVIDE STRUCTURED CAREER ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR TECHNICIANS**
- 2) **CAREER LADDERS SHOULD BE EVALUATED AND ADJUSTED PERIODICALLY TO ENSURE THEY ARE MEETING THE INTENDED GOALS**
- 3) **FOCUSED EFFORTS ARE NEEDED TO DEVELOP TECHNICIAN LEADERSHIP SKILLS BEFORE AND AFTER TRANSITIONING INTO A LEADERSHIP ROLE**



References

1. Vermeulen LC, Kolesar JM, Crismon ML et al. Pharmacy forecast 2018: strategic planning advice for pharmacy departments in hospitals and health systems. *Am J Health-Syst Pharm.* 2018; 75:23-54
2. Zellmer WA, McAllister EB, Silvester JA et al. Toward uniform standards for pharmacy technicians: summary of the 2017 Pharmacy Technician Stakeholder Consensus Conference. *Am J Health-Syst Pharm.* 2017; 74:1221-8.
3. Pedersen CA, Schneider PJ, Scheckelhoff DJ. ASHP national survey of pharmacy practice in hospital settings: prescribing and transcribing – 2016. *Am J Health-Syst Pharm.* 2017;74:1336-52





Technician Advancement & Leadership in a System without an Established Career Ladder

Jeff Wagner, PharmD, MPH, BCPS
Director of Pharmacy
Texas Children's Hospital



Objectives

Define "career ladder" and "career lattice" and the potential application and approach in health-systems.

Develop an understanding of the potential barriers in establishing a formalized career ladder.

Discuss strategies to elevate technicians along a "career path," in the absence of a "career ladder" and to develop leadership skills.



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Audience Poll

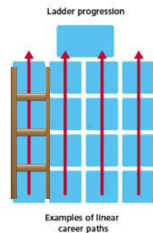
Raise your hand if you believe this statement to be correct?

"Career ladder is a metaphor for job promotion."



Career Ladder

- Method of talent development and retention
- Series of steps or a progression within a job classification with increasing pay, skill, responsibility, or authority
- Designed to encourage and assist professional growth and development without changing career



<https://www2.deloitte.com/insights/solutions/deloitte-reviews/issue-8/the-corporate-lattice-rethinking-careers-in-the-changing-world-of-work.html>

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Reflection

Is all career progression linear?

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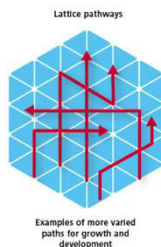
Audience Poll

Raise your hand if you have heard the term “career lattice?”

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Career Lattice

- Method of talent development and retention
- Adaptive progression that enables employees to move in several directions, rather than just upward
- Adopted by many organizations for talent development and retention; not well adopted in healthcare



<https://www2.deloitte.com/insights/industry/healthcare/issue-8/the-corporate-lattice-rethinking-careers-in-the-changing-world-of-work.html>

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Career Lattice in Healthcare

- Not well adopted in healthcare due to specialization, training, and licensure/certification requirements
- Specialization can contribute to burnout and talent drain, while a lattice can yield a more versatile and rewarding career with balance and flexibility
- It is recommended that healthcare organizations explore and adopt the concept, although it may not be applicable in specialized niches
 - Changing attitude and behavior is more difficult than teaching new skills and competencies

<https://www.wiederholdassoc.com/blog/2018/02/02/career-lattice-vs-career-ladder>

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“Career Growth”

- Definition of “career growth”
 - Historical: title or compensation; ladder-like
 - Lattice: challenging abilities & expanding role



<https://www.wiederholdassoc.com/blog/2018/02/02/career-lattice-vs-career-ladder>

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Optimizing Technician Career Growth

- Task driven vs. role driven
 - “Task”
a usually assigned piece of work often to be finished within a certain time
 - “Role”
a function performed in a particular operation or process



Activity

	Task Driven	Role Driven
1. Tech check tech		
2. Medication reconciliation		
3. Shift supervisor/Team Lead		
4. Drug shortage management		
5. Medication safety & quality		
6. Budget and finance		
7. Drug diversion		
8. Audit function		
9. Technology/IS		
10. Clinical services expansion (i.e. adherence, MTM, transitions)		
10. Other		



“Career Path”

- Sequence of roles for an employee within an organization
- Tends to align more with a lattice than a ladder
- Various positions moved through vertically, laterally, or cross functionally



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Texas Children's Hospital

- Pharmacy Enterprise
 - 534 employees
 - 239 Technicians
 - 3 hospitals, 3 retail pharmacies, 1 specialty pharmacy
 - 762 beds
- No technician career ladder
- Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB) Certification required & supported
- IV certification required & supported



Barriers to Career Ladder

- Individuals within a single job description or job code performing similar or overlapping tasks with different pay
- Division of technician staff to smaller team or functions that makes coverage for shifts and vacancies more challenging
- Shift responsibilities vs. employee staffing shift
 - Example: "Central Day 8" shift can be staffed by "tech 1" or "tech 2"- same responsibilities/tasks with different pay
- All technicians at Texas Children's within one job code
 - Inpatient dispensing (clean room), retail, compounding & repackaging, inventory support, etc.



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Success without a Formalized Career Ladder

- Pharmacy leadership worked with Human Resources to advance technicians, supporting their education and training to develop skills, competencies, and abilities for new and expanded roles
- “Career lattice” mindset
 - Going back to the principle that changing attitude and behavior is more difficult than teaching new skills and competencies
 - Create positions that acknowledge pharmacy technician experience as meeting the qualifications for roles
 - Build particular skills and competencies into development plans for individuals to qualify them for positions
 - Within department & pharmacy school defaults to being more ladder-like
 - Others more lattice-like: nursing, finance, contracts administration, HR



Success without a Formalized Career Ladder

- **239** staff level technicians; **40** technicians [16.7% of the technician workforce] have advanced to one of the following roles...

- | | |
|---|---|
| – Assistant Director, Applications & Technical Services (1) | – Coordinator, Quality & Compliance (2) |
| – Manager, Pharmacy Financial Services (1) | – Medication Area Inspector (2) |
| – Technician Manager (8) | – Pharmacy Buyer (2) |
| – Manager, Pharmacy Inventory (1) | – Auditor (6) |
| – Supervisor, Pharmacy Inventory (4) | – Systems Analyst (3) |
| – Inventory Specialist (4) | – Financial Analyst (2) |
| – Coordinator, Employee Development (2) | – Financial Counselor (1) |
| | – 340B Coordinator (1) |

- A number of technicians have taken varied “path” to other fields



KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Technician leadership and advancement can occur along a ladder or a lattice that ultimately traces a career path.
2. In organizations where career ladders face a number of barriers, opportunities to advance technicians remain.
3. Technician advancement is deserving of our attention, focus, and commitment.



References

1. Benko, C, Anderson M, Vickberg S. The corporate lattice: A strategic response to the changing world of work. *Deloitte Insights*. January 1, 2011. <https://www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/deloitte-review/issue-8/the-corporate-lattice-rethinking-careers-in-the-changing-world-of-work.html>
2. Paul M. "Career lattice vs. career ladder." Wiederhold & Associates blog. February 2, 2018. <https://www.wiederholdassoc.com/blog/2018/02/02/career-lattice-vs-career-ladder>



Activity 1:

- What strategies does your institution employ to foster pharmacy technician career advancement and professional development?
- What challenges or successes have you seen with those strategies?

Activity 2:

- What are the most unique pharmacy technician roles at your institution today? What roles are on the horizon?
- What training or development was needed to ensure technicians successfully stepped into those roles?

Activity 3:

- How do you see the role of pharmacy technicians evolving in 10 years? What roles will they fill? What is needed to get there?
- How do we continue to professionalize and develop the role of pharmacy technician as a career?