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Coordinating Council on the Clinical Laboratory Workforce

Coordinating Council on the Clinical Laboratory Workforce Addresses Growing Workforce Shortage

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Fourteen laboratory organizations participate in strategic planning meeting aimed at increasing the number of qualified laboratory professionals

Rosemont, Ill., April 18, 2008 – The Coordinating Council on the Clinical Laboratory Workforce (CCCLW), which is a broad-based coalition of national laboratory associations, industry partners, and other healthcare organizations, held a two-day strategic planning session to discuss the serious workforce shortage facing the clinical laboratory profession. The purpose of the meeting was to develop strategies to increase the number of qualified professionals in the field.

The magnitude of the shortage is significant and likely to worsen significantly. In fact, the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that 10,000 new clinical laboratory scientists and technicians will be needed per year over the next 10 years, but fewer than 5,000 are graduating from laboratory science programs annually. As much of the current workforce is near retirement, recruiting young professionals to the field becomes increasingly important.

“At a time when healthcare consumes more than 16 percent of the country’s GDP, clinical laboratories provide a significant level of value – contributing up to 70 percent of the objective information used to make key medical decisions, while comprising less than 5 percent of a typical hospital budget,” said Joeline Davidson, representing the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Advisory Committee (CLIA). “CCCLW recognizes that without a resolution, the workforce shortage could threaten the clinical and economic outcomes of healthcare consumers. This is one reason we are committed to educating people about the importance of clinical laboratory professionals and developing effective recruitment efforts to encourage younger generations to join the career field.”

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Organizations participating in this meeting included the AABB, the American Society for Clinical Pathology (ASCP), the American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science (ASCLS), the American Association for Clinical Chemistry (AACC), the Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA), the Healthcare Laboratory Workforce Initiative (HLWI) of California, the National Credentialing Agency for Laboratory Personnel (NCA), the National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences (NAACLS), the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL), the Association of Genetic Technologists (AGT), the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Advisory Committee (CLIAC), the American Medical Technologists (AMT), the Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council (MCHC), the CLMA, and Abbott Laboratories.

Together the group successfully identified four strategic directions for addressing the workforce shortage: develop a business case for increasing investment in the resolution of this shortage, improve the professional profile of laboratory professionals by expanding their role on the healthcare team, align the scope of practice by standardizing credentials and aligning curriculum, and develop effective recruitment and retention efforts.

“By galvanizing the efforts of the laboratory profession’s leading organizations, we have identified many of the causes leading to the workforce shortage and strategies for addressing the issue,” said Paula Garrott, chairperson of CCCLW. “We are committed to continue working together to find solutions to this growing problem, and we are confident that with a unified voice we will achieve notable results.”

Participants to the strategic planning session each made a commitment to present the results of this meeting to their organizations and to call for organizational engagement. Additionally, each attendee walked away from the meeting with specific action items that support these strategies and work toward a solution to the issues facing the clinical laboratory workforce.

About Coordinating Council on the Clinical Laboratory Workforce (CCCLW)

The Coordinating Council on the Clinical Laboratory Workforce (CCCLW) is a coalition of clinical laboratory organizations, governmental and regulatory agencies, and industry partners focused on addressing the growing clinical laboratory personnel shortage. CCCLW is committed to identifying the issues impacting the shortage of laboratory personnel and addressing these issues through an ongoing and collaborative effort.