

## **"ASCP BOR Certification: The Standard of Excellence" for 75 Years**

The ASCP Board of Registry (BOR) recognized its 75th Anniversary in 2003. The BOR was established by the ASCP in 1928 as its certifying bureau, only six short years after the Society was founded.



ASCP took the first step at its annual meeting in 1926 with the appointment of a Committee on Registration of Laboratory Technicians. The Committee's goal was to "first define a technician; possibly different classes of technicians as Class A, Class B and Class C; and then make it known that a bureau exists which will bring forth applications for registration."

Ward Burdick, MD, one of the founders of the ASCP, was the first to chair the new Committee. Upon his death in early 1928, Kano Ikeda, MD, succeeded him. Dr. Ikeda assumed responsibility for researching and drafting the first "Rules and Regulations of the American Registry of Medical Technicians." The ASCP Board of Registry as it is known today evolved from this first benchmark.

In the early days of pathology, the laboratory technician learned through on-the-job training or an apprentice-type system that differed from laboratory to laboratory across the country. There were no standards for measuring the assistants' qualifications or competency and no agency for certification existed.

Pathologists recognized the need for technical assistants qualified to work in a medical laboratory. It took Dr. Ikeda and his committee two years to complete their research. In 1928, the Committee recommended the creation of a permanent Registry "... to issue certificates of registration...to investigate and register acceptable schools of laboratory technicians" and the adoption of the classification "Laboratory Technician" and "Medical Technician" based upon minimum standards defined by ASCP.

ASCP appointed its first president, Philip Hillkowitz, MD, chairman of the board that would oversee its new Board of Registry in 1928. The five members of the Board were Drs. Ikeda, C.Y. White, Roy M. Mammack, M.W. Lyon and Alvin G. Foord.

As part of its original purpose, the BOR helped the ASCP to develop and set standards and guidelines for competency among laboratory technicians. In 1931 the ASCP published the BOR's Approved Methods in Laboratory Techniques, to establish standards for the clinical laboratory.

The BOR issued its first certificate in 1930 to Paul H. Adams of Fort Worth, Indiana. The Medical Technologist certificate was issued to special applicants who met the requirements of the Board. The Laboratory Technician certificate was given to all

technicians who met the minimum requirements without examination.

The BOR established the use of the initials "MT" and "LT" after the registrant's name in 1931. Later they added the parenthetic initials "(ASCP)" as other organizations attempted to grant the same designation, thus establishing the ASCP BOR's certification as its own. The BOR certification was soon recognized as the "gold standard" within the industry.

As its responsibilities grew over the years, the BOR moved from a room in a pathologist's private office with one secretary as staff to a suite of business offices in Chicago with 25 employees. Staff helped to coordinate the work of 100 laboratory professionals on the examination committees that produced each certification examination.

In the 1970s, the BOR became more administratively independent from the ASCP to ensure credibility in the certification process. Since issuing its first certificate in 1930, BOR has certified over 410,000 professionals.

The BOR's mission was extended over time to include career recruitment, the study of career trends, and public awareness of the profession. Today it is the preeminent clinical certification agency serving the profession. The BOR's biannual Wage and Vacancy Study has become a professional touchstone and one that the United States Department of Labor includes in its research and statistics.

The BOR's efforts in the development of modern certification methods and establishing essential criteria for each certification, has secured a respected place for qualified laboratory professionals in the industry and medical laboratories in hospitals, research facilities, and physician offices. The BOR opened the era of health profession testing, one characterized by both greater public accountability and greater test sophistication. In its leadership role of assessing the competency of medical laboratory professionals, the BOR will continue to serve the health care needs of the nation.

During the past 75 years, ASCP Board of Registry has continually met and exceeded the demands of the industry and certificants for a registry and certifying bureau for laboratory professionals. Today, the BOR is nationally recognized for the integrity of its work and its 23 certifications, including several specialist categories. The future looks bright for the BOR as advances in science and medical technology create more opportunities for laboratory professionals.

**Historical highlights include:**

- 1926 After two years of work, the Committee on Registration formulated rules and regulations for governing a registry.
- 1928 With the adoption of the Committee's recommendations, the ASCP Board of Registry was officially formed at the Society meeting in Minneapolis.
- 1930 The first certificate is issued to Paul H. Adams of Fort Wayne, Indiana.
- 1931 The use of the initials "MT" and "LT" after the registrant's name was instituted.
- 1933 By this time, all applicants for registration were required to take both written and

- practical examinations, as well as met certain ethical codes applicable to health care practices.
- The requirement for pre-technical education was increased to one year of college with specific science requirements.
- 1936 Use of the title "Laboratory Technician" was discontinued, and all subsequent registrants were designated "Medical Technologists."
- 1937 BOR publishes what came to be known as the "Curriculum for Schools of Medical Technology."
- 1939 A national program of seminars is planned with state boards of health and medical schools.
- 1940 An educational fund is established for "improvement in the practice of medical technology."
- 1941 Under increased pressures of wartime need for more medical laboratory workers, the BOR undertook the national recruitment of medical technologists. As a result, many of the recruitment methods were developed that are still being used today.
- 1944 The war had so restricted travel that it became impossible for the BOR to carry out the practical part of the examination for registration, so this section was eliminated.
- 1946 Another medical technologist was added to the Advisory Committee of Medical Technologists, bringing MT representation to six.
- 1947 Another two MT members of the Advisory Committee were invited to sit with the BOR at all of its sessions.
- 1949 Machine analysis of the BOR grading system began to provide schools of medical technology with detailed statistical information about their teaching programs.
- 1956 A second or interim meeting of the BOR was added due to the increased volume of work.
- 1958 Standards were raised to provide that all students must have at least three years of college training with suitable science courses for entrance into an acceptable school.
- 1959 BOR moves into new quarters in Muncie, Indiana and grows the staff to 34.
- 1964 Laboratory Aide certification becomes the new Certified Laboratory Assistant (CLA) becoming the second generalist level for which the BOR provided certification examination.
- 1970 BOR moves to ASCP national headquarters in Chicago, Illinois
- 1977 ASCP Board of Directors determined that the BOR should be administratively independent in matters related to certification.
- Today BOR is very active with scheduling 11,000 applications for examinations annually.

#### **Other Changes Over Time Reflect BOR Growth**

- From several dozen applications for registration prior to 1928 to over 11,000 per year

- From less than 100 certifications in early 1930 to more than 170,000 certifications in the generalist and specialty categories by the late 1970's
- From conducting examinations in a few locations to administering them in 200 cities in 50 states, Canada, Puerto Rico, Korea, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore.
- From an original Board membership of four to five pathologists to today's 21-member Board consisting of five pathologists, six medical technologists, two public members, and representatives from each nine participating specialty societies: AABB, American Association for Clinical Chemistry, American Association of Pathologists' Assistants, American College of Microbiology, American Society for Apheresis, American Society of Cytopathology, American Society of Hematology, Clinical Laboratory Management Association, and National Society for Histotechnology.
- From slow and often subjective hand grading of essay-type examinations to today's timely objective administration of examinations using computer adaptive testing, and other sophisticated test construction, analysis, and validation procedures.