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News

THE POWER OF CREDENTIALS IN MEDICAL LABORATORY SCIENCE: Insights from University Health - San Antonio



Stephanie Whitehead, MBA, MPH, MLS(ASCP)^{CM}

In a recent interview with the ASCP BOC, Stephanie Whitehead, MBA, MPH, MLS(ASCP)^{CM}, highlighted the pivotal role that credentials play in the medical laboratory profession. As the Executive Director of Pathology Services at University Health - San Antonio and co-host of the eLABorate Topics podcast, Ms. Whitehead

possesses a deep understanding of the medical laboratory field and the professional development of its workforce.

University Health operates across a vast network that includes 14 departments with a cross-section of disciplines. This system is heavily invested in fostering a culture where professional credentials are not just encouraged but seen as a hallmark of excellence and dedication. Many of the laboratory professionals within the system hold ASCP BOC credentials.

ASCP BOC credentials are often emphasized as a critical component of University Health programs. For instance, one important initiative under Ms. Whitehead's leadership is the partnership with BioBridge Global to offer a Specialist in Blood Bank Technology/Transfusion Medicine (SBBT/TM) Program. This program is unique in that it not only provides rigorous training but also offers an employee incentive that covers the costs of tuition and other expenses related to the SBB(ASCP) exam, demonstrating the system's commitment to supporting their staff's professional growth and an understanding of the professional value that ASCP BOC credentials offer to institutions.

Furthermore, University Health actively promotes the importance of credentials through various channels. Their marketing efforts, including the impactful “Everyday Extraordinary” (Link: [Lab Team | Everyday Extraordinary | University Health](#)) underscore the direct correlation between specialized training and enhanced patient care. Similarly, their human resources policies support this ethos by embedding credential requirements into career progression paths, ensuring that their staff are well-equipped to handle the complex demands of their roles.

Ms. Whitehead also touched on the broader implications of credentialing in the laboratory profession. She is a staunch advocate for standardized professional nomenclature, supporting the ASCP’s “I Am MLS” campaign to unify titles within the field. This standardization is crucial for professional identity and recognition across the healthcare industry.

“The value of certification extends beyond individual recognition; it is integral to patient care and laboratory operations,” said Ms. Whitehead.

“At University Health, certified professionals like phlebotomists receive incentives for obtaining their

credentials, which not only enhances their skills but also contributes to the overall quality of care provided.”

Challenges such as the medical laboratory workforce shortage are persistent issues that Ms. Whitehead acknowledges need strategic intervention. Initiatives like the ASCP’s Career Ambassador program are part of the solution, aiming to inspire new generations about the vital work performed by laboratory professionals.

Ms. Whitehead concluded by indicating that advocacy for credentialing in medical laboratory science highlights a critical pathway for professional development and quality patient care.

According to Ms. Whitehead, “University Health exemplifies how integrating rigorous standards, continuous learning, and professional growth into the fabric of healthcare institutions can yield significant benefits for both healthcare providers and recipients. As the laboratory profession continues to evolve, the role of professional credentials [such as those offered by the ASCP BOC] will undoubtedly remain a cornerstone of its success.”



University Health System – San Antonio, TX