

Medical Laboratory Workforce In Vermont

Summary of March 2005 Survey

Prepared by:

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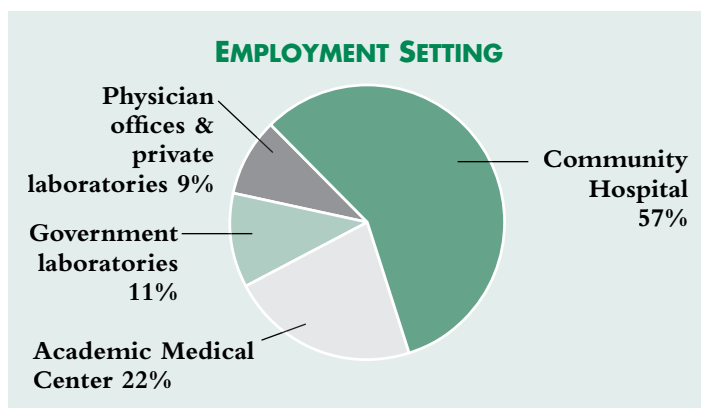
Funded by: HRSA grant #1R1CRH03426-01-0

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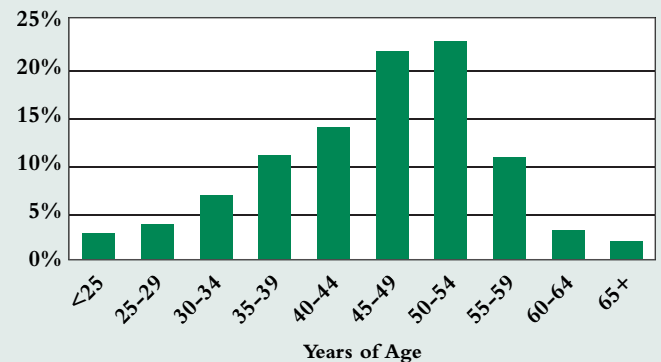
Background

Medical laboratorians (often referred to as Clinical Laboratory Scientists, Medical Technologists or Technicians) are employed in healthcare and public health settings as a critical group of health professionals. Recent reports indicate the vacancy rates in Vermont for these positions to be 4-6% with a mean of 15-16 weeks to fill a position¹.

The Office of Nursing Workforce Research, Planning, and Development, in collaboration with the Department of Medical Laboratory and Radiation Sciences conducted a survey of all laboratorians who perform diagnostic testing in Vermont. This is the first such comprehensive survey conducted for this profession in Vermont. The survey was distributed to the 474 identified laboratorians currently employed in the state. The survey was completed in March 2005 by 241 (51% response rate). The respondents were compared with the total sample with respect to employment setting and are representative.



AGE OF LABORATORIANS



Basic demographics:

- 83%, female; 17%, male
- 98%, Caucasian
- Age range: 21- 69 yrs.
- Mean age: 45 years; 76% are 40 years of age or older.
- Mean annual income: \$44,437
- 76% are the sole or primary income earner in their household

Laboratory science education:

- Bachelor's Degree, 56%
- Associate's Degree, 27%
- Laboratory Training Program, 12%
- Master's Degree, 2%
- Doctoral degree, <1%

Other educational information:

- 82% of laboratorians are professionally credentialed
- 72% received their credential from the American Society for Clinical Pathology(ASCP)
- 60% are credentialed at the Medical Technologist(MT) or Clinical Laboratory Scientist(CLS) level

- 47% have non-laboratory degrees in addition to their laboratory education
- 3% are currently enrolled in a laboratory education program
- 64% report participating in laboratory continuing education within past year
- 49% received their medical laboratory science education in Vermont

Years in career:

- 37% have worked 25 or more years in the medical laboratory profession

Top five reasons given for leaving (more than one reason could be chosen):

- Job Stress 45%
- Salary/Benefits 44%
- Management Practices 42%
- Position Change 31%
- Co-Worker Relationships 29%

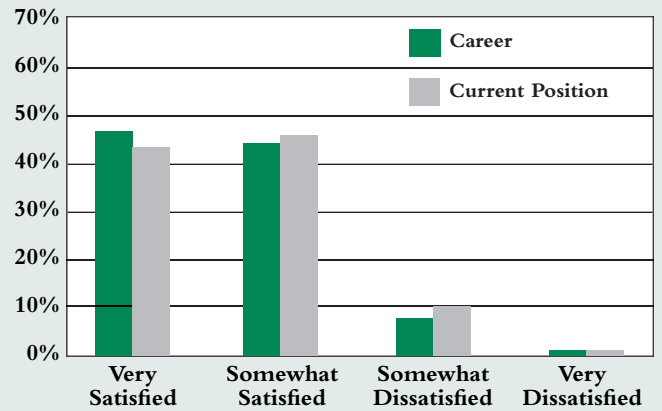
Discussion of These Findings

The profession of medical laboratory science is one that makes significant contributions to diagnostic and treatment decision-making in healthcare. This profession also represents the first line of defense within the nation’s Laboratory Response Network for disease surveillance. With recent advances in medical laboratory science, these contributions will become more significant and the demand for medical laboratorians more pronounced. Yet, compared to many other health professions with more direct patient interaction the profession is relatively unknown.

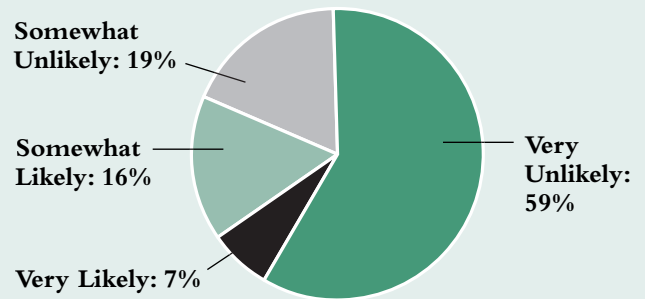
Medical laboratorians in Vermont are predominantly a baccalaureate-educated, professionally-credentialed group of health professionals. Despite that, their average compensation levels are less than most health professions that are predominantly comprised of individuals with associates degrees. Medical laboratorians in Vermont have a demographic profile that is similar to the nursing profession relative to gender, race, and age.

Of serious concern is that 23% of current laboratorians are planning to leave their positions within the next twelve months. Four out of five of the major reasons for leaving are negative in their implication (job stress, salaries, management practices and coworker issues). Even though retirement was not given as a major reason for plans to leave the profession, over a third of all medical laboratorians in Vermont have worked in the profession for over 25 years. So retirement may be an issue in the near future.

SATISFACTION WITH CAREER AND CURRENT POSITION



LIKELINESS TO LEAVE POSITION IN NEXT YEAR



Clearly, attention to the needs of this profession is warranted. Unless changes occur soon, the capacity of the medical laboratory system in Vermont will be overtaxed and the potential for an adverse effect on laboratory quality could well be expected.

Reference

(1) Office of Nursing Workforce Research, Planning, and Development, University of Vermont, “Vermont Health Workforce Assessment Survey” (2005).