

# Pharmacy Technicians: USA Experience

Mike Rouse

Director, International Services, ACPE

October 23, 2016

## PHARMACY

SHAPING THE FUTURE



# Overview of Presentation

- Definition and Terminology
- Some Facts and Figures about Technicians
- Key History and Developments
- The Current Situation
- The Future?

**Acknowledgment and Thanks:** Dr. Everett McAllister,  
Executive Director, Pharmacy Technician Certification  
Board (PTCB)



# ACPE History, Structure & Operations

- 1932: Established for the accreditation of professional degree programs in pharmacy in USA
- 1975: Accreditation of Continuing Education Providers
- 2011: International Services Program established; international “accreditation,” consultation, training
- 2015: Accreditation of pharmacy technician education and training (with American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, ASHP)
- Autonomous, independent, not-for-profit agency based in Chicago, Illinois, USA
- Recognized by U.S. Department of Education
- Mission to assure and advance quality of pharmacy education

**NABP**

**Regulation**



**Education**

**Practice**

**AACP**

**APhA**

# Definition\*

A pharmacy technician is an individual who, under the supervision of a licensed pharmacist, assists in pharmacy activities that do not require the professional judgment of a pharmacist.



\*Council on Credentialing in Pharmacy, 2009.  
(There is no nationally adopted definition)

# Terminology

- Majority of states use designation “*pharmacy technician*”
- Other designations used:
  - ➔ Unlicensed personnel; unlicensed person; unlicensed assistant
  - ➔ Support personnel; supportive personnel
  - ➔ Ancillary personnel; non-pharmacist personnel
  - ➔ Technician; pharmaceutical technician
  - ➔ Pharmacy personnel; pharmacy assistant

# Some Facts and Figures

- Pharmacy technicians' roles are changing, expanding and advancing as pharmacists move to more direct patient care
- Pharmacy technicians are integral in supporting pharmacists in all practice settings
- Increased demand for prescription medications and inter-professional team-based care will lead to more demand for pharmacy services and advanced roles for technicians
- Advanced roles require moving from unskilled labor to certification for protection of patient safety

# Some Facts and Figures

- Estimated > 400K pharmacy technician jobs today (more than pharmacists)\*
- ± 70% in community; ± 20% in hospital
- 9% growth in employment estimated between 2014-24 (vs. 36% between 2000–10)\*
- ± 280K with active PTCB certification; ± 588K certifications granted since 1995 \*\*
- Wide variation in state regulation
- Wide variation in education and training programs (on-the-job, vocational and technical colleges, high schools, online courses, two-year diplomas)

Data from Bureau of Labor Statistics\* and PTCB\*\*



# Key Developments: How Did We Get Here?

- **1960s:** Profession-wide **study on the role of pharmacy technicians** (commissioned by ASHP, APhA, AACCP and National Association of Retail Druggists)
- **1970s:** ASHP developed **training guidelines** for pharmacy technicians and competency standards for **hospital** supportive personnel
- **1982:** ASHP developed **accreditation standards** for pharmacy technician training programs; most accredited training programs were in hospitals at that time
- **1988: Consensus Conference** (ASHP Foundation) - identified need for consistent title, uniform definitions, defined duties, standardized training and education, modernization of statutes and regulations

# Key Developments

- **1992–94:** Scope of Pharmacy Practice Project – incl. comprehensive **task analysis** for pharmacy technicians
- **1995:** Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB) established first nationally recognized credential
- **1996:** Model Curriculum (1<sup>st</sup> edition; ASHP et al)
- **1996:** White Paper on Pharm Techs (APhA/ASHP)
- **1999:** PTCB updated the **task analysis**
- **1999:** Council on Credentialing in Pharmacy (CCP) founded
- **2001:** Model Curriculum updated based on updated task analysis, and predicted future roles and functions of pharmacy technicians

# Key Developments

- **May 2002:** Pharmacy Technician “Stepping Stones **Summit**” – inconclusive; some “consensus,” some “push-back”
- **2002:** Updated White Paper “**Needed Changes Can No Longer Wait**” endorsed by 12 CCP member organizations:
  - ➔ Pharmacist workforce shortage
  - ➔ Momentum for pharmaceutical care
  - ➔ Safe medication useAll point to a need for better preparation and utilization of pharmacy technicians
- **2003:** CCP invites ACPE to conduct **profession-wide dialogue** concerning the possible development of national standards and an accreditation process for pharmacy technician education and training



# Key Developments

- **2003:** Written comments from individual practitioners (pharmacists, pharmacy technicians) educators, national and state associations, professional and trade associations, state boards, others; 10 open hearings; 4 “town hall” meetings
- **2004:** ACPE presented results to CCP
- What was heard?

“Don’t do anything!  
Raising the requirements  
for education & training,  
and introducing national  
standards will create  
problems!”

“National standards are  
urgently required! Can’t  
this be done more  
quickly?”

# Generally Supportive of National Standards

- Technician Associations
- ACCP, ASHP, DHSS, ISMP, Army, Navy
- Technician Educators
  - The most passionate advocates!
- Individual practitioners (pharmacists & techs) who “testified”



# Generally Not Supportive of National Standards

- NACDS (+ individual chains)
- NCPA (+ individual community pharmacy owners)

Note:  $\pm$  70% of pharmacy technicians are employed in community pharmacies



# Mixed Responses

- Some *for*, some *against*
  - ➔ State Boards of Pharmacy
  - ➔ Pharmacy Organizations (mainly state)



# Conclusions from Dialogue

- Important issue; technicians play a vital role
- No profession-wide consensus
  - ➔ what tasks, what levels, what competencies, what education and training, how to quality assure, are there different needs in different sectors, who decides what's needed?
- Ultimately, it is the **responsibility of state boards** to protect the public (state boards largely appeared to be undecided about future direction)
- **“Need for more discussion”** and consensus building
- **2004:** CCP requested the Joint Commission of Pharmacy Practitioners (JCPP) to take up the discussion; **not actively followed-up**; no political will?



# Further Developments

- Nationwide press coverage of several deaths from major medication errors that involved pharmacy technicians; Ohio passes legislation which dictates to the profession the necessary education of pharmacy technicians
- Second certifying body established (primarily supported by the community pharmacy sector)
- **2009:** Council on Credentialing in Pharmacy (CCP) developed the *Pharmacy Technician Credentialing Framework*



# CCP Pharmacy Technician Credentialing Framework (2009)

1. One valid **national task analysis** ...
2. Educational **outcomes and competencies** based on the task analysis will be established for use in the education, training, examination, and certification of pharmacy technicians.
3. A **model curriculum** ... based on the outcomes and competencies identified from the national task analysis. The educational preparation will include both **didactic and experiential components**.
4. A national **programmatic accreditation** system ....



# CCP Pharmacy Technician Credentialing Framework (2009)

5. State boards of pharmacy will **regulate** pharmacy technicians and **require them to complete a nationally accredited education** and training program and **pass a competency-based examination** ...
6. State boards of pharmacy will develop a “**pharmacy technician in training**” category.
7. State boards of pharmacy will require pharmacy technicians to **maintain their competency** ....
8. State boards of pharmacy will develop a method of **reciprocity between states** for pharmacy technicians.

[www.pharmacycredentialing.org](http://www.pharmacycredentialing.org)

[www.sapc.za.org](http://www.sapc.za.org)

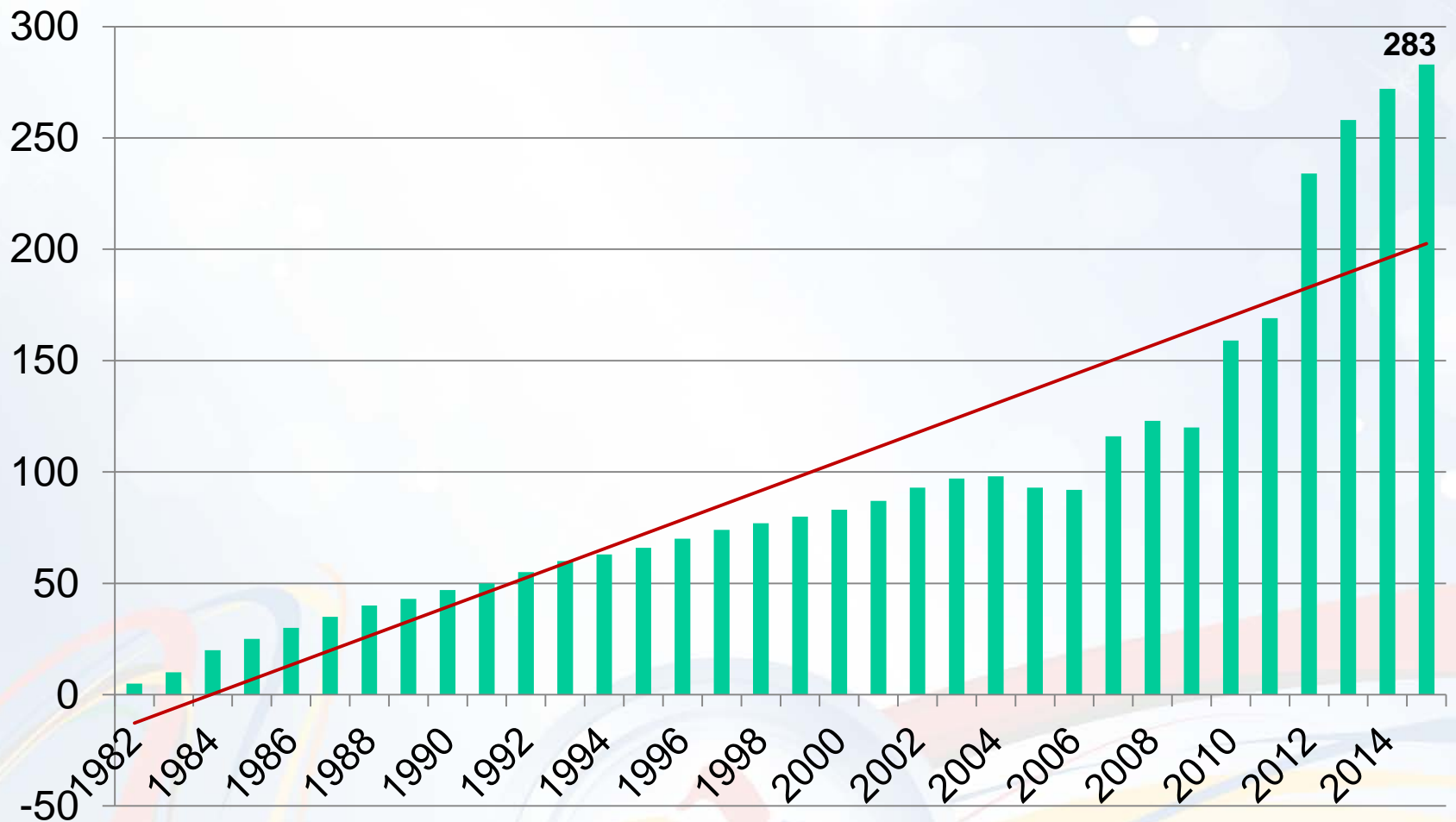
# Current Situation

- Task Analysis regularly updated by PTCB; indicates changing practice and advanced roles
- ASHP Model Curriculum and Accreditation Standards updated
- Incremental but slow changes in state regulations, including expansion of “tech check tech”
- **2013:** PTCB announces that effective 2020, accredited education and training will be required to sit for the certification exam
- **2015:** ACPE and ASHP collaborate to establish Pharmacy Technician Accreditation Commission (PTAC)
- **2015-16:** Several states amend regulations setting higher requirements for education and training, including accredited education and training

# State Regulations

- **45** states and Washington DC regulate pharmacy technicians
- **24** states include national certification in regulations
- **19** states require a background check
- **22** states require CE
- **5** states do not regulate pharmacy technicians
- Many states have pending legislation or regulations

# ASHP-Accredited Pharmacy Technician Training Programs



# Charting the Future?

- **2016:** ACPE, PTCB and ASHP announce convening of an invitational stakeholder consensus conference in February 2017



- Purpose - to affirm or determine:
  - ➔ Technician scope of practice
  - ➔ Entry-level knowledge, skills, and abilities that all pharmacy technicians must have regardless of practice site
  - ➔ Recognition of competencies beyond entry level practice and related issues
  - ➔ Education, training and certification requirements
  - ➔ State board of pharmacy registration or licensure

# In Conclusion: Where We Are ...



What do this ketchup bottle and the current U.S. pharmacy state board regulations on pharmacy technician education and certification have in common?



Vlasses, ACPE Executive Director, NABP Annual Meeting • May 2016



# Where We Want To Be

A better **qualified** and trained workforce

- Improved **patient safety**
- Greater **consistency** in technician workforce
- Accreditation standards updated as needed to stay consistent with **expanding roles** and responsibilities of technicians
- Greater ability to **delegate** technical tasks from pharmacists
- **Less turnover** in pharmacy technician positions
- Proactive approach to **drug diversion prevention**



***Thank you for your  
attention!***



# Contact ACPE International Services

- By phone: +1 (312) 327-8207 (Mike Rouse direct)
- By phone: +1 (312) 327-8217 (Ms. Silvi Kastrati direct)
- By phone: +1 (312) 664-3575 (ACPE general line)
- By fax: +1 (312) 664-4652
- By e-mail:  
Mike Rouse - [mrouse@acpe-accredit.org](mailto:mrouse@acpe-accredit.org)  
Ms. Silvi Kastrati - [skastrati@acpe-accredit.org](mailto:skastrati@acpe-accredit.org)  
Web site: [www.acpe-accredit.org](http://www.acpe-accredit.org)
- By mail: 135 South LaSalle Street, Suite 4100, Chicago, Illinois, 60603-4810, USA