



# Today

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## What is our Future? Increased Salaries or Decreased Demand

by Cheryl Caskey

*Ed. Note: The following is adapted from the MedLab-L mailing list and is used with Cheryl's permission. The discussion to which Cheryl responded involved whether laboratorian salaries were likely to increase since there is a personnel shortage in many areas of the country. Some respondents indicated that there is a decrease in demand that is offsetting the shortage and thus is a force keeping salaries down. Cheryl makes some extremely valid points that we all should take to heart and act on as we are all affected by the changes in the health care environment in one way or another and we are doing virtually nothing to influence these changes.*

The personnel shortage is a real issue and could result (and has already in some areas of the country) in some salary increases, but there is no guarantee. One of the things this profession lacks is a unified focus or a large, collective voice with clout. Since that is the case and since the CLIA personnel standards do not provide for properly educated and trained practitioners, there is significant risk that the laboratory practitioners of the future could very well be other, more aggressive healthcare professionals (i.e., nurses or pharmacists) or OJT individuals employers can hire at lower wages. The healthcare climate right now favors the latter.

I am not sure we really all realize the risks that face us as a profession. We have never stepped forward to promote ourselves as a profession or tried to join together into a professional organization that represents the interests of the practice field. Nurses and pharmacists have done that and they continue to actively promote themselves. They continue to try to expand their scope of practice (at the expense of Clinical Laboratory Science in many cases) and have sent the message that their own scopes of practice are off limits to those outside their practice fields. The public recognizes both professions and understands they need to be educated and licensed.

Laboratory practitioners need to become advocates for the profession and stop thinking someone else is going to take up our cause. If we do not care enough to fight for our practice field, we cannot expect others to care about this field. We need to make sure the public knows what we do and why properly trained and educated individuals should do their laboratory testing. When we were working on the licensure bill in Louisiana, we found the public thought we were already

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licensed. The public is totally clueless about our profession.

We have made choices in the past that have negatively impacted the profession (apathy about professional issues, failure to unify, failure to certify our own practitioners and control entry into the practice field). We can continue to make negative choices or we can choose to be advocates and do what it takes to elevate the profession to a place of prominence. The choice is ours to make.

## **Membership Recruitment Dues Savings**

ASCLS and VSLCS needs you to help recruit new members. If we want to make an impact on the future of our profession...this is the best way to do it! The more united we can be under one association, an association dedicated to building collaborative relationships with other laboratory specialty societies, the better we will be able to speak with one voice. Use the Top 10 Reasons on the back page to convince your colleagues that joining ASCLS is important if the profession is to have any voice in health care decisions. This is important for Virginia as well. Any presentation of viewpoint on any health care issue is accompanied by the question: How many practitioners do you represent? Strong membership = strong credibility. Additional members also contribute to VSCLS' ability to provide strong continuing education programs each year. We need new people to contribute ideas and energy to the development of our annual spring meeting. Please become an active advocate for your profession.

As an incentive to current members to spread the word, ASCLS has instituted a program in which you are credited \$5, towards your next year's dues, for each new member recruited. See the information on the back page for how easy it is to obtain this additional benefit.

## **A Round of Applause for Darrell Little**

Darrell has graciously decided to donate the server space for the VSCLS Website in addition to serving as VSCLS' webmaster. The VSCLS Board of Directors wishes to publicly thank him for this generous donation on behalf of the membership. We would like to ask all of the VSCLS members with web access to visit the VSCLS website at <http://vscls.vavalleyweb.com/> and look around and see what great work Darrell has done for all of us. Thanks, Darrell!!

## **Meet us at the Beach!!**

We had such a good time last year that we're going to meet there again this year! VSCLS Spring Meeting, Ramada Plaza Resort Oceanfront, Virginia Beach, Virginia April 4-6, 2001. Great education, great networking! Come and join the fun while keeping current in your profession. Meeting rates available before and after the meeting, so make it into a weekend getaway! Keep an eye out for the Spring Meeting brochure...coming your way soon!

## **Nominations**

The Nominations Committee presents the following slate of candidates. The election for these offices will be held at the Annual Business Meeting during the Spring Meeting in Virginia Beach. All members are encourage to attend.

President-Elect:	Janet Hiler
Treasurer:	Darrell Little
Nominations Committee:	Barbara Lindsey

## **Become active in the VSCLS Grassroots network!**

One way to start is to write a letter of introduction (or send an e-mail) to our Virginia Senators and indicate that you are a Clinical Laboratory Scientist (or Technician) and are willing to serve as a resource to them or their staff on laboratory issues. You can mention any particular legislation about which you may be concerned (either for or against) such as the Patient's Bill of Rights, Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage or concern about oversight on regulatory issues such as the recently released Advanced Beneficiary Notice under Medicare or the Confidentiality regulation under HIPAA. However,

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you should be aware that neither of our Senators are assigned to committees with direct responsibility over health care issues, but they will be voting on any bills that come before the whole senate; so it is even more important to educate them on these issues.

US Senate contacts for Virginia

The Honorable George Allen  
United States Senate  
Washington DC 20510  
(202)224-4024

The Honorable John Warner  
225 Russell Bldg.  
Washington DC 20510  
phone (202)224-2030  
e-mail senator@warner.senate.gov

### **DID YOU FORGET??? THE TIME TO RENEW IS NOW!**

By this time, many of you may no longer be receiving the reminders to renew your ASCLS/VSCLS membership and you may no longer be receiving any publications. I hope that you have no concerns about renewal and that you had just forgotten. However, just in case, let me plead a strong case for renewal. ASCLS has been our advocate on Capitol Hill by:

- \* Urging Congress to delay the consideration of any further cuts in Medicare payments to the clinical laboratory until more data can be gathered by the Institute of Medicine
- \* Promoting the provisions to require qualified adequately educated and credentialed laboratory personnel
- \* Convincing Congress to restore payments or delay the payment reductions previously mandated by Congress

VSCLS has been our advocate by:

- \* Lobbying the Virginia Board of Health Professions in favor of Licensure
- \* Providing the annual meetings across the state of Virginia
- \* Providing the Hampton Roads area with local FREE continuing education sessions

Help ASCLS and VSCLS continue in these efforts by renewing your membership. If you have already renewed - Thank you!

Want to become involved in VSCLS? There are many tasks that do not require a great deal of time and, yet, are necessary and valuable to the society. Questions about how to become involved or about membership issues...Call Pam Lonergan at (757) 823-9459 or (757) 547-3447 or email pblonergan@nsu.edu.

### **VSCLS Names 2001 Scholarship Recipient**

The Scholarship Committee is pleased to announce that this year's VSCLS Scholarship has been awarded to Christina Seamans Duke. Christina is a student at the Augusta Medical Center, School of Clinical Laboratory Science. The Blood Bank supervisor at Augusta Medical Center writes: "Christina is trying to complete her education in Fisherville while her family is elsewhere. Trying to maintain two households, and at the same time continue to perform at an above average level in this field, would be a chore for anyone. She is a delight to talk with and I am expecting great things of her in the future." Congratulations, Christina!!



**VSCLS**  
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 American Society  
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 Laboratory Science

For every new active  
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member recruited earn  
 a \$% coupon to be  
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 membership fee!

Just place your name and  
 ASCLS # in red ink or  
 highlighted pen on the front  
 of the recruited professional's  
 ASCLS application form  
 above the words "Application  
 for Membership." It's that easy!

**VSCLS Contacts**

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**VSCLS is now on the Web!!**  
 Come visit us at <http://www.vscls.vavalleyweb.com>

**Submissions/Letters can be sent to:**  
 Connie Laubenthal  
 10113 Blue Coat Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030  
*connie@his.com*

**Top 10 Reasons to Join ASCLS**

- #10 - Group rates on liability insurance & other programs
- #9 - Professional recognition, scholarships, & grants are offered
- #8 - Informative publications & a great website
- #7 - Affordable, accessible, & up-to-date CE
- #6 - Abundant networking opportunities at conferences
- #5 - ASCLS Annual Meeting & joint Exposition with AACCC
- #4 - National Medical Laboratory Week & other public awareness activities
- #3 - Leadership development opportunities abound
- #2 - A single, strong voice for CLS in collaborative activities & actions
- #1 - Monitors and influences issues and actions in Wash. DC that impact the entire profession

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