



SPECIAL REPORT

Voices from the field: supporting the educational needs of cytotechnologists

Maria A. Friedlander, MPA, CT (ASCP) CMIAC^{a,*},
Lynnette S. Pineault, MBA, SCT (ASCP)^b,
Amber Donnelly, PhD, MPH, SCT (ASCP)^c,
Sandra Giroux, MS, SCT (ASCP) CFIAC^d, Kalyani Naik, MS, SCT (ASCP)^e

^aMemorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, New York, New York

^bLaboratory Medicine and Pathology Services, Regions Hospital, St. Paul, Minnesota

^cThe University of Nebraska Medical Center, Omaha, Nebraska

^dThe University of Vermont Medical Center, Burlington, Vermont

^eMichigan Medicine, Ann Arbor, Michigan

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Introduction Sustaining a well-trained, competitive, and marketable cytotechnology workforce is a major goal of the American Society of Cytopathology/American Society for Clinical Pathology Workgroup Focusing on Emerging Roles in Cytopathology (ASC/ASCP Workgroup). This article describes the data collection initiatives performed by the Workgroup to confirm cytotechnologist (CT) perceived educational needs to keep pace with emerging practice changes in the workplace. In response to data collected, the Workgroup created Advanced Cytopathology Education (ACE)—a unique, innovative educational resource designed to fulfill this need.

Materials and Methods Data collection efforts included annual needs assessment surveys to gauge CT participants' preferred topics and learning modalities. These data were used to design and prioritize ACE topics. Program evaluations were also administered to evaluate participants' perceptions of program quality and effectiveness at meeting their educational needs.

Results Research findings reveal CT education needs to align with emerging practice areas as reported in other Workgroup data collection efforts. The incorporation of new entry-level competencies in cytotechnology training programs prepares new CT graduates, but there is no standardized mechanism for formal, robust, and recognized ongoing education for other practicing CTs.

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*Corresponding author: Maria A. Friedlander, MPA, CT (ASCP) CMIAC; 1275 York Avenue, Room H502, New York, NY 10065. Tel.: +212-639-2545. E-mail address: angelesm@mskcc.org (M.A. Friedlander).

Conclusions This article highlights the educational endeavors carried out by the Workgroup in fulfilling the educational needs of practicing CTs as communicated through various data collection efforts. As CT responsibilities evolve, ASC and Workgroup efforts will continue to focus on providing educational support for current practicing CTs who need training in emerging practice areas.

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Introduction

Sustaining a well-trained, competitive, and marketable cytotechnology workforce is a major goal of the American Society of Cytopathology/American Society for Clinical Pathology Workgroup Focusing on Emerging Roles in Cytopathology (ASC/ASCP Workgroup). Consisting of three subgroups (Trending Data, Practice, and Education), the mission of this Workgroup is to engage, contribute to, and provide support for current and future cytology professionals by gathering and triaging data relevant to current and emerging practice opportunities and by developing educational opportunities to sustain a well-trained cytotechnologist (CT) workforce.

An ASC/ASCP Companion survey on *Emerging Roles for Cytotechnologists* was conducted in 2014 by the CT members of the ASC Executive Board. The results of this survey, which were presented at the 2014 Annual Scientific Meeting of the ASC, provided qualitative feedback from over 300 CT respondents regarding their desire for continuing education and training in emerging practice areas (unpublished results). Respondents shared their current challenges and their expectation and desire for professional societies to provide educational support, including online, formalized education.

In an attempt to respond to and provide the educational support needed by practicing CTs, the Education Domain of the Workgroup initiated two educational avenues for

learning: Advanced Cytopathology Education (ACE) conferences and ACE University, an online educational platform. To guide development of both learning programs, the Workgroup sought to confirm CTs' educational needs via online needs assessment surveys and post-conference program satisfaction evaluations. This article describes the data collection initiatives performed by the Workgroup to confirm educational needs and desired learning preferences, and to direct the Workgroup's goal to design unique, innovative, and high-quality data-driven educational ACE resources that would fulfill CTs' needs.

Materials and Methods

To enhance the design and delivery of the ACE educational program, the Workgroup collected data by polling regional cytology professionals to assess their perceived needs within the targeted ACE meeting location. These data were used to identify the most desired educational topics for ACE and determine the most preferred and appropriate teaching modalities through which to administer education. Although ACE is designed to address the needs of CTs within the ACE meeting region, an exception was made in 2017 when the ACE meeting was held in New York City. As New York City was considered a city that could potentially draw CTs from all over the country, polling was expanded to include CTs both within as well as outside of the Northeast region in

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