

EDITORIAL

Pharmacy Technician Educators Council: A Lamp on a Stand

STANLEY J LLOYD

The 2001 Pharmacy Technician Educators Council (PTEC) Annual Meeting in Toronto was a tremendous success, primarily because of the high level of interest and, I dare say, the passion that exists among technician educators for the concerns of both their students and the pharmacy technician profession in general. Although a full report on the meeting will appear in our next issue, I will now share some of my observations as a first-time attendee.

Impressively, more than one-half of PTEC's approximately 100 members attended the meeting despite the significant registration and travel expenses incurred by the participants and their schools. A sense of familiarity, almost family, pervaded the group, many of whom had met and worked together on several prior occasions during the ongoing growth of the organization. Although many of the attendees were technicians themselves, I also met people with backgrounds in pharmacy (both BS and PharmD), medicine, law, the military, and a variety of other disciplines. All of these people had one common desire: to improve their students' lives through education and guidance into a career as a pharmacy technician.

This became obvious not only through individual conversations I had with PTEC members, but also during the presentations and organized discussions held during the meeting. These lively exchanges covered topics such as the role of educated technicians in curbing the medication error epidemic, the integration of technician laboratory training with that of pharmacy students, and even controversies surrounding the hiring of pharmacy technician students before their graduation.

In addition to working with each other, PTEC members are realizing new opportunities to cooperate with other organizations. PTEC officers reported on recent, positive talks with officers of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy. Plans were also discussed to work collaboratively with other technician organizations, with the common goal of improving the quality of pharmacy practice everywhere through the promotion of the use of highly skilled, formally educated pharmacy technicians.

The attending PTEC members represented technician training programs offering a generous mix of career opportunities, many of which could literally turn a student's

▲
Pharmacy technician education is
indeed in good hands.
▼

life around. For example, one program teaches not only the ABCs of pharmacy technology, but also how to create a résumé and present oneself in a professional environment. These absolutely essential skills will likely prove as useful as the pharmacy-specific training itself. Another technician training program will offer a unique two-year degree beginning this fall. Although the first year will focus on pharmacy technology and award a completion certificate, continuing through the second year will confer an associate's degree in business management, thus lowering a career ladder into the hands of many students who previously lacked such opportunities. Several other PTEC members mentioned having pharmacy technician program graduates leap from the technician to the pharmacist career ladder, a growing trend, as some programs now allow trained technician graduates to track straight into pharmacy school.

Pharmacy technician education is indeed in good hands, as evidenced by the obvious enthusiasm and care that PTEC members have for the organization, their students, and pharmacy education in general. I recall one educator mentioning a recent experience in her program wherein a student, a single mother, showed up for lecture one day with her young children. The student had lost her apartment that morning, yet still persisted in coming to class, children in tow, because she knew that her reward, a promising career, was not far away. Similarly, PTEC has persisted on through an era of both challenge and ambivalence toward technician education and is now beginning to see the fruits of its efforts. Like a once hidden lamp that is suddenly placed on a stand to shine, these educators are helping the entire pharmacy profession see a brighter future through cooperation, common goals, and innovative technician training programs.

STANLEY J LLOYD PharmD, Assistant Editor, *jPT*.