

## **Task Force Recommends Strengthening Technician Education and Training Program**

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To focus on strengthening the training and educational program standards for pharmacy technicians, the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy created the Task Force on Pharmacy Technician Education and Training Programs and charged it with addressing the following:

- *Review existing state requirements for technician education and training, requirements for national technician training program accrediting organizations, such as the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP), and the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) Core Competencies; and*
- *Recommend national standards for technician education and training programs and encourage boards of pharmacy to recognize them.*

The task force also discussed several related issues, including requiring completion of pharmacy technician training to be eligible for certification, developing an accreditation system for pharmacy technician training programs, and strengthening the requirements asked of applicants wishing to take the Pharmacy Technician Certification Examination. The task force also discussed how the NABP Clearinghouse could continue to be used to track information on pharmacy technicians.

The task force made several recommendations in the interest of protecting the public health and recommended that NABP encourage state boards of pharmacy to require pharmacy technicians to complete an education and training program as an element of pharmacy certification completion. Members further recommended that by 2015 state boards of pharmacy require all pharmacy technicians to complete an accredited education and training program, a date consistent with the Joint Commission of Pharmacy Practitioners "Future Vision of Pharmacy Practice 2015." Jeanne Waggener, R.Ph., chair of the Texas State Board of Pharmacy, represented Texas on the Task Force.

The task force asserted that accreditation for pharmacy technician training programs is needed to ensure appropriate standards that will protect the public health. As such, it was further recommended that NABP assist in developing a national accreditation system for pharmacy technician education and training programs by 2015.

Considering information presented to the task force, members acknowledged that current pharmacy technician education and training requirements lack uniformity from state to state. Further, members noted that all state certified technicians must complete an ASHP accredited program. The members agreed that a single organization established within the profession of pharmacy should be the sole accrediting agency. Other organizations have been established outside the profession of pharmacy to develop accreditation systems for pharmacy and members noted that these organizations may not have the knowledge or background in pharmacy to ensure appropriate accreditation standards are developed.

Therefore, the task force also recommended that NABP encourage ACPE and ASHP to work collaboratively to develop an accreditation system for pharmacy technician education and training programs that reflects all pharmacy practice settings and, if feasible, to consolidate the activities into one accrediting body, preferably ACPE. In their discussion, members noted that ACPE accredits pharmacist educational programs, but does not accredit pharmacy technician training programs. Members also discussed the ASHP accreditation process, acknowledging the misperception that ASHP accreditation is seen as a hospital model that is not applicable to all pharmacy technician practice settings.

In addition to discussing training requirements for pharmacy technicians, members discussed the need for national practice standards for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians that will help define their evolving roles with the goal of high quality patient care and positive patient outcomes. Practice standards for pharmacy technicians will also help in the development of education and training program standards. Members agreed that input from all key stakeholders – representatives from state boards of pharmacy, relevant government agencies, pharmacy associations, and accreditation bodies – is important in the development of practice standards and training program standards. Thus, the task force recommended that the NABP Executive Committee should commission a standing committee to develop and maintain national standards for pharmacy practice and assist boards in defining the roles of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians, and in developing technician education and training program standards. Upon review of this recommendation, the Executive Committee determined that a standing committee would not be developed, but that task forces would be established as needed.

The task force made two recommendations related to the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB), the entity that administers the current Pharmacy Technician Certification Examination. First, the task force recommended that NABP encourage PTCB to require that applicants complete an accredited pharmacy technician education and training program and submit verification of a high school diploma or GED to be eligible to sit for the examination. Second, members recommended that NABP

encourage PTCB to provide the information it maintains on pharmacy technicians to the NABP Clearinghouse. The information from PTCB would allow NABP to fortify the information contained in the NABP Clearinghouse to include additional pharmacy technician licensure, registration, certification, and disciplinary information for the benefit of the state boards of pharmacy and the public health. Members agreed that the reporting of PTCB information can complement the reporting efforts of state boards of pharmacy. Members also discussed and supported the recommendation from the 2008 Task Force on Standardized Pharmacy Technician Education and Training that encourages state boards of pharmacy to report pharmacy technician disciplinary information to the NABP Clearinghouse and requests that NABP expand its licensure transfer program to include pharmacy technicians. Members emphasized that the NABP Clearinghouse will positively impact the practice of pharmacy by ensuring a national pool of pharmacy technicians that have achieved a standard level of competency and professionalism.

The task force made a final recommendation that will assist potential pharmacy technicians. Specifically, members recommended that ASHP accreditation standards require that pharmacy technician education and training programs inform potential program applicants of applicable state requirements for registration or licensure before they apply to a program. Members agreed that this accreditation requirement is necessary, in the interest of fairness to applicants, so that programs will inform them of circumstances, such as prior criminal convictions, that would make them ineligible for registration or licensure regardless of program completion.

In summary, the eight recommendations of the task force which were approved by the NABP Executive Committee during its February 2010 meeting are as follows:

Recommendation 1:

NABP should encourage boards of pharmacy to require, as an element of pharmacy technician certification, completion of an education and training program that meets minimum standardized guidelines.

Recommendation 2:

NABP should encourage boards of pharmacy to require, as an element of pharmacy technician certification, completion of an accredited education and training program by 2015.

Recommendation 3:

NABP should assist in developing a national accreditation system for pharmacy technician education and training programs that is based within the profession of pharmacy and utilizes a single accrediting agency by 2015.

Recommendation 4:

NABP should commission a standing committee to develop and maintain national standards for pharmacy practice to assist boards in defining the evolving roles of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians and technician education and training program standards. Upon review, the Executive Committee determined that a standing committee would not be developed, but that task forces would be established as needed.

Recommendation 5:

NABP should encourage the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) and the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) to work collaboratively to develop an accreditation system for pharmacy technician education and training programs that reflects all pharmacy practice settings and, if feasible, to consolidate the activities into one accrediting body, preferably ACPE.

Recommendation 6:

NABP should encourage the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB) to change the process by which it determines who is qualified to sit for its examination to include completion of an accredited pharmacy technician education and training program and high school diploma or GED verification.

Recommendation 7:

NABP should encourage PTCB to provide NABP with information on its certified pharmacy technicians so that NABP may enhance the pharmacy technician data contained in the NABP Clearing-house to provide the information necessary for the state boards of pharmacy to protect the public health.

Recommendation 8:

NABP should encourage ASHP to revise its current accreditation standards for pharmacy technician education and training programs to require accredited providers to inform potential program applicants of applicable state requirements for registration.

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