



Spring 2010

*Texas Association for Clinical Laboratory Science*

# TACLS News

## **TACLS Convention 2010 Update**

**Dave Falleur**  
**TACLS News Editor**

The 2010 TACLS Convention will be held at the Wyndham El Paso Airport Hotel, April 7-10. The program will start with Student Bowl Competition on Wednesday evening. This year we will have up to 12 teams competing. Four of the teams will start competition on Wednesday. The official opening of the exhibits and a reception in the exhibit area will be held on Thursday morning. Scientific sessions will be held on Thursday and Friday with a variety of topics that will be PACE approved. The keynote speakers will be ASCLS President, Dr. Mary Ann McLane, and Dr. Kathleen Becan-McBride, Chair of the ASCP Board of Certification Board of Governors. A Student Forum meeting and election of student officers will be held on Friday. Student posters will also be presented and judged on Friday. The TACLS Awards ceremony will be held Friday evening, followed by the TACLS Business Meeting. At the Awards Ceremony, President Peter Chu will recognize Omicron Sigma Recipients, the TACLS Member of the Year, Presidential Merit Awards, and the Student Bowl and Poster winners. Another business meeting will be held on Saturday morning. All TACLS members are welcome to attend the business meetings. For the latest information about the convention, check the TACLS website, [www.tacls.org](http://www.tacls.org)

## **In this issue of the TACLS News**

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## Who Am I?

I, or someone like me, have touched you hundreds of times, but you never saw me, never felt me. I give you hope, provide joy, and unfortunately, deliver bad news. I am never there to share in your excitement or comfort you in your times of sorrow. However, I still feel these emotions from a distance.

My tasks are limitless, but always behind the scenes. I know that because of me, the world is a better place.

I am a **Laboratory Scientist**. I am the one who discovered a pregnancy in the couple who had a slim hope of ever bearing a child, but was not there to “high-five” them. I gave closure to thousands of families of the 9/11 disaster by identifying the remains of their loved ones, but was not there to share their tears. I personally discovered a terrorist’s weapon of choice, Anthrax, but could not bask in the limelight.

I discovered that the lump in your sister’s, wife’s, or mother’s breast was not cancer after all (or was). I found your disease early enough for a successful recovery or at least in time for you to wrap up loose ends.

I recognized when you needed more iron, less medication, and a better diet. I identified a perfect match for the donor heart you so desperately needed. I supply most of the evidence your physician uses to diagnose your ills. But I never get to tell you so.

*The laboratory community is a large, critical component of the health care industry. Our role in the delivery of health care is a dramatic one. We play a vital role in the detection, diagnosis, and treatment of disease, spanning the continuum of health care. Laboratory tests serve as the foundation for diagnosis and management of conditions like cardiac disease, HIV, cancer, diabetes, kidney disease, and infectious diseases.*

***Laboratory test results impact up to 70% of all critical decisions related to patient care.***

Adapted from an article written by Karen Gordon, President, Virginia Society for Clinical Laboratory Science . *ASCLS Today* Feb. 2010



In this 35th year, it is important to reflect on the important history of National Medical Laboratory Professionals Week (NMLPW). NMLPW originated in 1975, as NMLW, under the auspices of the American Society for Medical Technology, now called the American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science (ASCLS). In subsequent years, other organizations have served as cosponsors and campaign supporters. In the fall of 2005, National Medical Laboratory Week was changed to National Medical Laboratory Professionals Week to emphasize the person whose expertise is needed in the performance of laboratory testing. Beginning in 2010 the organizers decided to “brand” the event by using the same theme each year, Laboratory Professionals Get Results.

There are approximately 300,000 practitioners of clinical laboratory science in the United States. Since the development of this career group in the 1920s, the clinical laboratory science professional has played an increasingly vital role in the diagnosis and prevention of disease.

Today, the clinical laboratorian is a key member of a health care team.

# **TACLS Members Recognize Senator Eddie Lucio**

**Dr. Karen Chandler, TACLS  
President-Elect**

District XVI hosted a dinner for State Senator Lucio on March 1, 2010. The purpose of the dinner was to present Senator Lucio with an award from TACLS for his work to help ensure quality healthcare and quality laboratory testing for all Texans through licensure of laboratory personnel. The event was held at the Knapp Medical Conference Center in Weslaco, Texas and there were over 60 local laboratory professionals in attendance. Karen Chandler, TACLS President Elect gave a short speech on the need for licensure and showed the “Silent Treatment” video from the Labs are Vital Program. She then presented the award to Senator Lucio and thanked him for his efforts on behalf of licensure for laboratory personnel in the State of Texas. Senator Lucio thanked the organization and promised to fight for licensure in the next legislative session. He indicated that we need to begin earlier and promised to help us find a sponsor in the House. He acknowledged that it is not always easy to support legislation that might have opposition but in this case he felt that it was the “right thing to do!”

Karen S. Chandler  
Assistant Dean and CLS Program Director  
College of Health Sciences and Human Services  
University of Texas-Pan American



Senator Lucio and President-Elect Chandler



Senator Lucio speaks to District XVI TACLS members.



Senator Lucio promises to support quality healthcare for all Texans.

# Texas Senate Hearing Reveals Lab Personnel Not Counted

## John Wentz, TACLS Board Member

The Texas legislature meets in regular session on odd numbered years. In between sessions, standing committees of the Texas Senate are directed by the lieutenant governor to study “interim charges.” Senate committees hold public hearings where invited speakers are asked to make presentations to the committee members. By signing-up the morning of the hearing, uninvited speakers can address the committee for three minutes toward the end of the hearing. Most presenters also submit printed testimony. The work done between sessions allows the legislators to become educated about issues and is a means for interest groups to inform policy-makers about their concerns. Currently, Interim Charge number five to the Texas Senate Health and Human Services Committee is a study of “the state’s current and long-term need for physicians, nurses, dentists and other allied health and long-term care professionals.” The subject is not new to the committee, which for years has been aware of an increasing gap between supply and demand of healthcare professionals. There are usually appeals to address the nursing shortage and to increase the ranks of primary-care physicians, especially in the vast rural areas of Texas. Before 2008, allied health professions, which include the clinical laboratory, were not always represented. This year’s hearing began with testimony from Ben Raimer M.D., appointed by Governor Perry to chair the “Statewide Health Coordinating Council.” Raimer discussed a 125-page report entitled the *2009-2010 Texas State Health Plan Update - Ensuring a Quality Healthcare Workforce for Texas*.<sup>1</sup> This is a report on the numbers of various healthcare professionals working in the state. One category of professional not mentioned in this report is the



clinical laboratory. Dr. Raimer testified the omission was because laboratory personnel are not licensed and suggested that laboratory personnel be licensed.

Dr. Douglas Murphy, representing the Texas Society for Allied Health Professions (TSAHP)<sup>2</sup> also testified at this hearing. Murphy stated that 60%-65% of the healthcare work force is allied health and that personnel shortages in many disciplines are proportionately worse than nursing. For example, projections from the Texas Workforce Commission predict a 39% shortfall in physical and respiratory therapists and 38% in dental hygienists by 2014<sup>2</sup>. TWC also predicts a 25% shortage of clinical laboratory scientists. It is not clear how TWC made this projection, as other state agencies do not know how many laboratory personnel are working in Texas. In 2008, the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) asked the Texas Association for Clinical Laboratory Science (TACLS) for those numbers. TACLS could not provide an answer; which led to a 2008 statewide survey<sup>3</sup> of laboratory managers on staffing. Indeed another portion of testimony by Murphy, cites a DSHS publication

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## Texas Senate Hearing Reveals Lab Personnel Not Counted

entitled – “Supply Trends Among Licensed Health Professions<sup>4</sup>.” Missing from this report are laboratory professionals, which arguably have greater numbers and impact on patient outcomes than some which are licensed in Texas.

Besides the obvious reasons of quality and patient safety, another case for licensure is so laboratory professionals can be counted by the state. Not being a licensed health profession prevents Texas laboratory students, new graduates and laboratory education programs from receiving benefits such as student loan forgiveness or tuition assistance. Not being counted means when state policy makers develop programs to address shortages, the need for clinical laboratory professionals will not be considered. Changing this continues to be the responsibility of our profession.

By John Wentz, M.S., MLS(ASCP)  
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### References

1. Available online at: [http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/CHS/SHCC/reports/SHPupdate09\\_10.pdf](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/CHS/SHCC/reports/SHPupdate09_10.pdf)
2. Written testimony 23 Feb 2010 by TSAHP available online at: <http://tsahp.org/links.html>
3. 2008 TACLS survey of Texas lab managers available at <http://www.tacls.org>
4. Available online at the DSHS website: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/CHS/HPRC/09trends.pdf>

## Texas State CLS Students Provide Community Service

**Dave Falleur**  
**TACLS News Editor**

Every year Texas State University sponsors an event titled Bobcat Build. This year more than 3,000 students gave up their Saturday to help residents in San Marcos and surrounding communities with clean-up, build out, and restoration projects. The event began with a pep rally and encouragement from our State Representative, Patrick Rose, and our Congressman, Lloyd Doggett. Free breakfast tacos and coffee helped us get started. The CLS Student Society of Texas State has participated in this activity for the past three years now. This year approximately 20 students helped clean the yard of a retired couple in San Marcos. They painted fences, moved concrete posts, trimmed shrubs, and planted landscape plants. “We could not have done this without your help”, the homeowners praised the hard work and enthusiasm of the group. Bobcat Build helps students realize the importance of giving back to their community.



**Have a great story about your laboratory staff or students?**

**Send it to Dave Falleur, TACLS News Editor, [davefalleur@yahoo.com](mailto:davefalleur@yahoo.com)**