



# INFUSION

Mid-Atlantic Association of Blood Banks

## President's Message



Dear MAABB Members...

As 2010 comes to a close, I take time to reflect on the year. The MAABB, like many other small professional organizations, remains a constant life line to member's professional development and peer to peer networking. As an Association, your membership participation is critical to sustaining the educational offerings and developing new ways to meet the needs of our ever changing industry. Innovation and thinking outside the box are what will keep the organization alive.

This year we partnered with a local Microbiology organization for our annual meeting which allowed us to share resources and expenses and bring to both memberships interesting and thought provoking speakers. This partnership was well received by both memberships and as such will be repeated for the 2011 Annual Meeting. Mark your calendar now to attend the 2011 Annual Meeting which will be held March 10 and 11 at the Anne Arundel Health Sciences Institute. Visit [www.maabb.org](http://www.maabb.org) in the New Year for complete details and registration information.

The Association presented its first Webinar in 2010 – enabling many members to attend an education session without leaving their office. Both affordable and content rich, you can expect to see more MAABB Webinar's presented in the New Year!

Enjoy the member spotlight on Joyce Westerman, MT(HEW) of Langley AFB in Virginia. And we can all learn something new as we read about the Perils and Pitfalls of Proficiency Testing.

Last, but certainly not least, if you have not already done so, please take a moment to renew your MAABB membership. You can do so online at [www.maabb.org](http://www.maabb.org).

Enjoy the holiday season, share special time with family and friends and begin 2011 revived and refreshed!!

Happy New Year!

*Michele Carter Hunt*

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## Editor's Note

Working in a blood donor center I have found how important thank you letters are. Thank-you letters are one of the most important letters I have mailed to donors. They remind donors that they made the right decision in supporting blood donations. They show that you are grateful for the donor's gift. The thank you letter increases donor loyalty, strengthens relationships with your donors and increases your chances of repeat donors. Below are some effective thank you letter tips.

- Be personal.  
Don't say "Dear Friend." Say "thank you".
- Show your gratitude by repeating, in a few different ways, that you are thankful for their donor's donation.
- Be specific if possible.
- Show how the donor's donation is being successful.
- Describe a recent success that was made possible by the donor's donation. Or show in other specific, tangible ways, how or where the donor's donation is making a difference in the lives of the people.

Happy New Year!

Walter Cancel, Jr.  
Editor

### EDITOR'S TRIVIA QUESTION



Graft-versus-host disease (GvHD) is a serious complication in transfusion medicine whereby the donated blood contains lymphocytes which can attack the recipient's body cells. How can a unit of blood or blood product be treated so that the risk of GvHD is reduced?



## The Perils and Pitfalls of Proficiency Testing

By Judy Sullivan, MS, MT(ASCP)SBB

Proficiency testing is such a way of life in the laboratory that most technologists take it for granted. However, proficiency testing, or PT, is regulated by the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments of 1988, and a laboratory can face serious consequences not only if it fails PT challenges, but also if it performs PT in violation of CLIA requirements.

### Testing PT Samples

According to 42 CFR 493.801, "The laboratory must test the samples in the same manner as patients' specimens." If a patient specimen is tested once and the result is reported, then the PT sample must be treated similarly. The sample must be tested using the laboratory's routine method. PT must be rotated among all employees who are responsible for patient testing. This is not a group project. A laboratory that is found to distribute the samples to several people and then compare the results to select the "best answer" will quickly find itself in trouble. Likewise, the lab that tests the sample on a second instrument to confirm results is not treating the sample as it would a patient specimen.

It is important to note, however, that facilities only testing donor specimens should substitute "donor" for "patient" in the CLIA regulations. Because donor testing can have implications for the diagnosis, prevention or treatment of disease, donor testing is regulated under CLIA. This includes not only obvious tests such as those for viral markers, but also less obvious tests such as platelet counts to qualify plateletpheresis donors and bacterial detection testing of random and apheresis platelets.

### Send It Out?

What if a laboratory's policy is to test a patient specimen up to a certain point, and then send it to another laboratory for additional testing? Should PT samples be treated in the same manner? The answer is no.

In this case, treating the PT sample as a patient sample and sending it to another laboratory holding a separate CLIA number results in a condition of PT referral. Why is this important? The consequence of PT referral is revocation of the laboratory's CLIA certificate for at least one year and possibly a monetary penalty. In addition, the laboratory director cannot direct another laboratory for a two-year period. Although the CLIA regulations regarding PT referral specify "that a laboratory has intentionally referred its PT samples to another laboratory," these penalties can be and have been imposed even if the individual who sent the sample is following routine protocols. Any laboratory that receives a PT specimen from another laboratory is required to notify the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services of the sample.

### The Subtleties of PT Referral

PT referral has been inferred in situations that may not intuitively appear to be a violation of regulations. The following are some examples of these situations:

- An organization that has multiple sites, each with its own CLIA number, subscribes to the same PT program for each site. All the packages of samples are shipped to a central location for distribution to the sites. If packages are mixed up and the wrong site performs the testing and reports the results, it may be considered referral of PT.
- Two technologists at different labs discuss the results they received on a PT sample. Most laboratories will agree that this is wrong, but may not be aware that this can be considered PT referral, with serious consequences to the lab. Even if the laboratory director was not aware of this conversation, he or she may be prevented from directing a laboratory for two years.

Does your company need to target blood banking and transfusion medicine professionals?

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## The Perils and Pitfalls of Proficiency Testing Contd.

- A laboratory decides to be thrifty and use leftover PT samples for competency assessment, training or verification of another test method used in the lab. If the results have not been submitted to the PT provider, this is PT referral. In fact, in a 2006 memo, CMS recommended: “To avoid any implication of PT referral, laboratories using previously tested PT samples for competency, training, and other purposes should wait until after the PT program returns the results on these samples prior to re-testing them.”

A final word of caution: PT referral applies to not only to analytes for which CLIA requires PT, but also to those analytes that require verification of test results twice annually (for example, bacterial detection, titration, eluate or direct antiglobulin testing.)

### An Ounce of Prevention

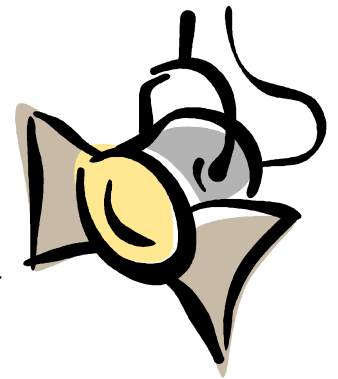
To avoid the perils of proficiency testing, a laboratory may consider the following strategies:

- Evaluate the proficiency testing process. Is it well-defined? Are there any “gray areas” that may cause inadvertent errors?
- Determine if samples are being used for other purposes in a manner that may be construed as PT referral and discontinue the practice.
- Review the process with current employees. Make certain that employees understand the regulations governing proficiency testing and the serious consequences for violating those regulations.
- Train new employees in the PT process.
- Provide instructions when each PT challenge is distributed.
- Incorporate an ongoing evaluation of the PT process (as well as results) into the internal assessment program.

Proficiency testing is a valuable tool laboratories can use to ascertain that test systems (methods, equipment and personnel) are functioning in a consistent and accurate manner and tests are providing accurate values. An effective proficiency testing program not only consistently “gets the right results,” but also meets all regulatory requirements — both necessary elements to ensure the ongoing operations of the laboratory.

## Member Spotlight

MAABB would like to welcome Joyce Westerman as the newest Virginia State Delegate to the Board of Directors. Joyce is currently the Blood Bank Supervisor at Langley Air Force Base in Langley, Virginia. Joyce attended the University of Western Carolina located in the beautiful mountains of Cullowhee in North Carolina where she received her Bachelor of Science in Medical Technology with a major in Biology and a minor in Chemistry. Joyce started her career at the VA Hospital in Asheville, NC where she worked in Microbiology for 10 years. In 1989, she moved to Crete, Greece where she worked as a Family Support Director and substitute teacher for students with special needs. She was able to resume her laboratory career, when in 1991, she moved to Lakenheath, England. While there, Joyce worked as the Chemistry Supervisor for two years and later as the Microbiology Supervisor until 1998 when again she and her family re-located to Williamsburg, Virginia and she was hired into her current position as Blood Bank supervisor in 1999. Joyce is married to a retired Air Force Senior Master Sergeant and has one son and three daughters, one of whom is married and living in Richmond, VA. Joyce likes to hike and backpack and is currently planning another daughter’s wedding for January, 2011. In her free time Joyce is also busy knitting outfits for the arrival of her first grandchild in 2012. Joyce is a welcome addition to the Board of Directors and we look forward to working with her in the coming year.





## SAVE THE DATE!

2011 Annual Meeting  
Anne Arundel Health Sciences Center  
Annapolis, Maryland  
MARCH 11-12, 2011



EDITOR'S  
TRIVIA  
ANSWER

Irradiation

### REMINDER!

The deadline for 2011  
membership renewal is  
December, 31, 2010.

Log onto [www.maabb.org](http://www.maabb.org)  
for complete details.

## **MAABB Officers and Delegates**

### **OFFICERS**

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### **INFUSION**

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### **Our Mission**

**It is the goal of the MAABB to become the most effective state/regional association of blood banks. This Association serves the Mid-Atlantic region for continuing professional education in the medical, scientific, technical and administrative aspects of blood banking and transfusion medicine.**



# Membership Application

(Please type or print clearly)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Degree/Certification: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Last) (First) (MI)

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide at least one email address (no more than two) as news of upcoming MAABB events and our Infusion newsletter is now sent via email.

Preferred Mailing Address:  Home  Work

## MAABB Committees:

Committee descriptions are found on the MAABB website: [www.maabb.org](http://www.maabb.org)

Please check the committee(s)/subcommittee(s) on which you are currently serving or are interested in joining:

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Would you be willing to participate in our workshops as a speaker or instructor?  Yes  No

Would you be willing to serve as a district/state delegate?  Yes  No

Membership Category:  Individual (\$35.00 per annum)  Sustaining (\$65.00 per annum)

Make check payable to **MAABB**.

Please return this form with your payment to:

**MAABB**  
**P.O. Box 9374**  
**Silver Spring, MD 20916-9374**

MAABB use only:  
Member ID: \_\_\_\_\_

MAABB membership application version 3 (12.09)

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