

Montana Laboratory News

Winter 2023

Editor Cara Bushmaker



ASCLS
The American Society for
Clinical Laboratory Science
MONTANA

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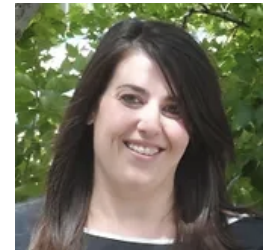
President's Message:

Greetings ASCLS-MT,

As 2022 has come to a close and as we ring in 2023, let's shift our mindset from looking back at the past to focusing on the present and the future. If your facility is anything like mine, you have been and continue to face staffing shortages and increased workload. As we begin 2023, let's remind ourselves to focus on creating a culture and environment where we can find joy and meaning in the work that we do. This year, as a board, we would like to engage with our members to learn more about each of you, listen to the struggles that you face, and through ASCLS-MT offer support to assure we are all finding the joy that we need to provide the best care possible for our patients.

Sadie Arnold, MLS(ASCP)CMSBBOM

ASCLS-MT President



CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Hello fellow ASCLS Montana members! The time has come to find some new candidates to serve on the board. Terms will begin August 1st, 2023. There are positions available for every comfort level. You can nominate yourself or another member (with their permission) by sending the nominee's contact information to one of the committee members listed below. Open positions for the upcoming term include:

President elect ~ Treasurer ~ Board of Directors ~ Nominations ~

Awards Scholarships

If you have ever wondered what doing more in ASCLS looks like, this is a great opportunity to get involved and have an active role in your state society. If you have any questions do not hesitate to reach out to any member of the nomination committee.

Thank you,

ASCLS – MT Nominations Committee

Maria Rodriguez- marilurodriguez.96@gmail.com ;

Emily Haight haightemily17@yahoo.com ;

Zanna Hartrich zanna.hartrich@gmail.com



ASCLS and ASCP Choosing Wisely Recommendations



- Don't repeat HbA1c testing within 3 months of a previous result.
- Don't perform an extensive work-up in otherwise healthy neutropenic patients of African or Middle Eastern ancestry prior to Duffy-null phenotype testing.
- Don't order ANA and ENA unless the patient is suspected to have a connective tissue disease.
- Do not measure the INR in patients who are taking an anti-Xa inhibitor.
- Don't employ a specific direct oral anticoagulant [DOAC] reversal agent without identifying the DOAC and estimating its plasma concentration.

Choosing Wisely-Our Mission

"The mission of Choosing Wisely is to promote conversations between clinicians and patients by helping patients choose care that is:

Supported by evidence

Not duplicative of other tests or procedures already received

Free from harm

Truly necessary"



ASCLS, ASCP and ASM Choosing Wisely Recommendations



- Do not routinely send urine for *Chlamydia trachomatis* and *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* (CT/NG) testing from females if vaginal swab collection is possible.
- Do not perform heterophile antibody (monospot) testing to diagnose acute EBV infection in children less than 5 years of age.
- Do not test for influenza unless the patient is symptomatic and the result will influence clinical management and decision making.
- Do not prescribe immune suppressive agents for suspected autoimmune hepatitis (AIH) without first excluding hepatotropic virus infections (e.g., viral hepatitis A, B, and C). Viral hepatitis may mimic AIH, both serologically and histologically, features that may resolve with direct-acting antiviral (DAA) treatment.
- Don't order tissue transglutaminase IgG antibody or Deamidated Gliadin Peptide (DGP) antibodies (IgG or IgA) in the initial screening for Celiac Disease.

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Legislative Updates

ASCLS Mid-Year Report: Recap of Clinical Laboratory Legislative and Workforce Issues for 2022-2023

The Mid-Year ASCLS House of Delegates meeting was held on Sunday, January 15th. Jim Flanigan, Executive Vice President of ASCLS, discussed the legislative landscape and workforce challenges for the Clinical Laboratory profession at years end for 2022 and what to expect in 2023.

PAMA ACT

The Protecting Access to Medicare Act (PAMA) act which mandates cuts to the laboratory fee schedules was delayed again by Congress by the passage of the Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal year 2023. This act included a one-year delay in laboratory testing fee cuts and obligations for reporting. There will be no cuts to Medicare payments for laboratory diagnostic testing through 2023. The next scheduled reporting period is scheduled for January 1, 2024. Jim indicated that if the PAMA act had gone into effect in 2023, laboratories would face a 15-percent cut in payments for the top 25- clinical lab tests. Overall Medicare spending has increased 17 percent since 2021, largely due to COVID-19, genetic, and chemistry testing. The Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) recommends that sampling a wider range of laboratory organizations would produce more accurate laboratory testing rates with less impact on the clinical laboratory fee schedule. The delay in cuts under PAMA is a short-term win for the laboratory community. However, the postponement of the PAMA fee cuts does not address the reform required to fix the methodology used to determine laboratory reimbursement fees going into 2024.

SALSA ACT

The implementation of the PAMA act in 2014 has put laboratories on an unsustainable path of continued year-to-year Medicare reimbursement fee schedule cuts. The Savings Access to Laboratory Service ACT (SALSA) was proposed to correct the methodology used to set laboratory fees under PAMA. The SALSA act would require that CMS use a statistically representative sampling of the laboratory market to determine Medicare's Clinical Laboratory Fee Schedule (CLFS). The SALSA act would also implement guardrails on annual increases and decreases to the fee schedule and increase the time between reporting periods to mitigate the 'shock' to the system by creating more stability in fee changes. The SALSA act is a bipartisan bill still pending in Congress for 2023. Jim encourages ASCLS constituent members to support the 'Stop the Cut's campaign by posting to social media and urging Congress to enact the SALSA act.



Across the nation, laboratory professionals save lives every day by diagnosing patients.

CDC improves laboratory quality and safety, informatics and data science, and workforce competencies to safeguard patient health as well as the public's health

Why Does It Matter?

70% of today's medical decisions depend on laboratory test results, showing the important role of clinical laboratories in today's healthcare system

Threats to **national security and health** can happen at any time, such as disease outbreaks, bioterrorist attacks, or chemical or radiological releases

~260,000 CLIA-certified laboratories across the country represent the cornerstone of diagnostic medicine today

Experts estimate that **40,000–80,000 deaths** occur annually from preventable diagnostic errors

14 billion laboratory tests are ordered annually —safety, quality, and cost effectiveness in laboratory testing are required for effective diagnosis and treatment of disease

Patients in **rural areas** often experience barriers to healthcare and laboratory services that limit their ability to receive the care they need

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Strengthening Clinical Laboratories in May 2021



Hope and Healing in the Medical Laboratory Science Community

Wrap up 2022 with host Galina Dronova and Elizabeth Power, a sought after speaker, consultant, and CEO of EPower & Associates, as we discuss the importance of community in our personal and professional journeys. Listen for advice on how to build community with patients and care teams.

LAB WEEK IDEAS:

This is the one time of the year when we get to promote our profession and spread the word that we do exist. It struck me as odd, when a few of my colleagues in other laboratories told me that they do not celebrate 'Lab Week.' Well we want that to change, so we've come up with relatively simple ideas and activities that any laboratorian can perform to "draw" their team in, and create a "blood" bond, all the while spreading the word that Medical Laboratory Professionals get the job done! -Amanda Holmes

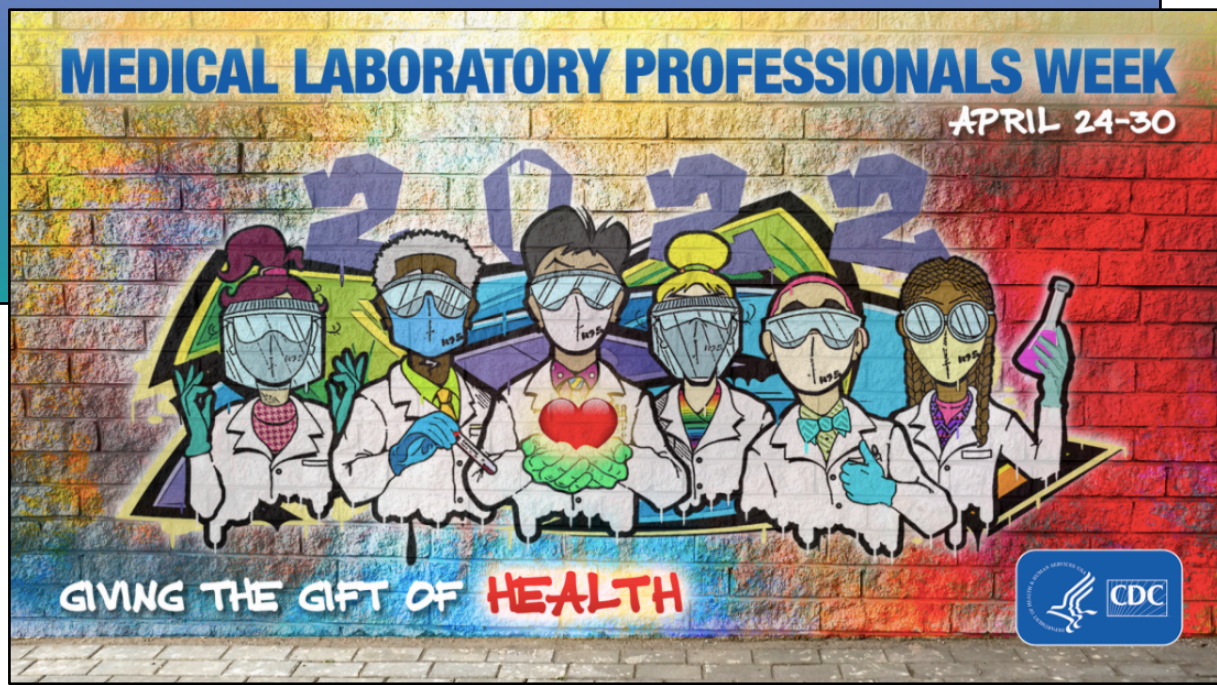
- ~ Decorate Your Lab Entrance with a door decorating contest.
- ~ Create themed days each week like crazy sock day, throwback day, decades day, crazy hat day, wig day, superhero day, sports day, etc.
- ~ Create a Lab Mascot for the year during Lab Week
- ~ Baking/Potluck Competition
- ~ Trivia games about co-workers or lab material
- ~ Gather a team and participate in the ASCLS Lab Week Run
- ~ Create a laboratory scavenger hunt with pictures of lab items or clues to the next location.



MONTANA
COMMUNICABLE
DISEASE EPIDEMIOLOGY

Keep up to date on the latest COVID-19 case counts, hospitalizations, and active cases by county. The state laboratory has expanded hours 7 days a week. Watch for updates via email!

[Montana Response-COVID-19](#)



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LAB EDUCATION IN MONTANA

FLATHEAD VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE- MEDICAL LABORATORY TECHNICIAN

The MLT program prepares graduates for entry-level positions in a clinical laboratory environment such as in hospitals, physicians' offices, commercial laboratories, biotechnology, research laboratories, pharmaceutical companies, technical services and sales, or veterinary laboratories.

Montana Medical Laboratory Science Professional Program

Is "science" considered one of your strengths? Have you thought about going into the medical field, but didn't think nursing or medical school was for you? Are you looking for a career that is exciting, rewarding, and always evolving? Medical Laboratory Science is a multi-dimensional field that requires a sharp mind, willingness to help others, and continuous learning.

2022 Review

- PAMA Cuts tabled again, on the horizon for early 2024 to be introduced for a 3rd time.
- VALID ACT: This proposal aims to enact a regulatory framework to standardize the implementation of laboratory developed tests that supports the patients, most importantly, as well as the test development staff.
- SALSA: Saving Access to Laboratory Services Act- Introduced in June 2022; this legislation is aimed to protect community and regional laboratories from Medicare reimbursement cuts that had been introduced with the 2014 PAMA legislation.

- Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments of 1988 (CLIA) Fees; Histocompatibility, Personnel, and Alternative Sanctions for Certificate of Waiver Laboratories: (Proposal to allow nurses to perform high complexity testing): More than 35K responses- will continue to monitor for updated actions.

2023 Reminders:

- Donate to our Political Action Campaign fund when you renew your ASCLS membership
- Patrick Cooney is our lobbyist, his information can be found at:
<https://federalgrp.com/team/patrick-cooney/>
- Upcoming Legislative News: continued updates from Governor's Red Tape Initiative: MLS Board to Program proposal



Anna Adams MPH, MLS(ASCP) CM, REHS
ASCLS-MT Leadership
PAC Chair
Webmaster/Circulation

Questions or Comments: Email asclsmt@gmail.com- subject PAC

Legislative Updates

VALID ACT

The Verifying Accurate Leading-edge IVCT Development (VALID Act) is described by Jim as a complex bill that has been under discussion for many years in Congress. The VALID Act would create a new category of 'in-vitro' clinical tests (IVCTs) that includes commercial kits and laboratory-developed tests (LDTs) using a risk-based framework that would be overseen by the FDA. The VALID Act is still pending in congress. Robert Califf M.D., the current Commissioner of the FDA, is considering regulating LDTs under its rule-making process if Congress fails to pass the VALID Act.

LABORATORY LABOR SHORTAGES

In 2022, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) suggest that nursing degree holders should perform high-to-moderate complexity testing to decrease the burden on laboratory labor shortages. Many clinical laboratory associations continue to oppose this change to CLIA that would allow nurses to be equivalent to Clinical Laboratory Scientists (CLS).

Additionally, CMS is considering a rule change under CLIA for Doctor of Clinical Laboratory Sciences as a qualifying degree as a Laboratory Director for high- complexity testing. The ASCLS supports this change to CLIA rules and has a position paper that describes the DCLS role and responsibilities.

Jim also discussed Title VII and VIII funding updates in Congress. The FY 2023 Omnibus budget approved an allocation of \$880 million which represents a 10% increase from 2022. The budget increase includes a 12 % increase for Health Professionals and a 10 % increase for Nursing programs. However, the laboratory profession is not specifically called out in the overall budget for receiving Title VII or Title VIII funding.

To address laboratory workforce shortfalls, the Bio Preparedness Workforce Act pending bill in Congress would establish a new loan repayment program for health professionals who spend at least 3 years of their time working in bio- preparedness and infectious diseases in underserved areas. In addition, a federal grant program would be created to assist allied schools in recruiting and retaining clinical laboratory students with funding for attracting faculty for these schools. ASCLS has drafted a proposal that supports a \$25 million allocation for student loan repayments and a \$25 million grant for clinical laboratory science programs. Jim concluded his discussion of laboratory congressional bills and laboratory workforce challenges by encouraging all ASCLS members to continue to advocate for laboratory issues. Jim emphasized the importance of laboratory advocacy with this quote from Lili Tomlin, " I always thought someone should do something about that...then I realized I am somebody."

Provided by Anne Tate

Leadership Academy – Working Together to Make a Difference



Leadership Academy Updates:

Anna Adams (MT) and Sarah Steinberg (WY) have been working monthly on a national Leadership Academy project. In addition to that coordinator Abbey Wichman fills the education sessions with tools to develop and aide in these amazing candidates continuing as strong leaders in ASCLS and in their life and careers. This year takes dedication and these two have done a phenomenal job of juggling life, family, and work along with LA. You are doing great, keep up the good work. We can't wait to see where Abbey takes our leaders next year! Dang, check out all the CEs in ONE year!

	CLASS	INSTRUCTOR	PACE
JACKSON	OPENING WELCOME	Abbey	
	COMMUNICATION STYLES	Abbey	1.5
	LEADERSHIP STYLES	Melissa	1.5
	PROJECT PLANNING/VOLUNTEER	Holly & Abbey	2
	TEAM BUILDING ACTIVITY	All	NA
	TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS	Debbie & Holly	1
	RECRUITMENT & RETENTION	Melissa	1
	EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE	Debbie	1.5
	PRESENTATION SKILLS	Chris	1
	P.A.C.E.		9.5
ZOOM	ASCLS 101: HISTORY OF THE PROFESSION - assignment	Joan	1.5
	PROJECT PLANNING/VOLUNTEER	Interns	
	CONVENTION PLANNING/DELEGATION SKILLS	Abbey	1
	ADVOCACY/LEGISLATIVE TOPICS	Debbie	2
	BURNOUT/STRESS MANAGEMENT	Cara	1
	REGION AND STATE LEADERSHIP BASICS	Ian	NA
	TEAM BUILDING/INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS	Chris	1
	MENTORING AND COACHING	April	1.5
	NETWORKING	Sadie	1
	P.A.C.E.		9
TBD	Intern attends state meeting and presents update on project or volunteer activities. Also, additional project workdays can be scheduled around state meetings.		
ZOOM	STRATEGIC PLANNING	Ashlee	1.5
	NUTS & BOLTS; WHO'S ROBERT	Holly	1.5
	P.A.C.E.		3
Grand Rapids	PROJECT or VOLUNTEER PRESENTATION/GRADUATION	Intern Team	
	TOTAL P.A.C.E.		21.5

ASCLS UPCOMING EVENTS:

1. Clinical Laboratory Educator's Conference

New Orleans, LA

March 2-4, 2023

2. 2023 ASCLS-MT Spring Conference

April 13th-15th, 2023

Butte Copper King Hotel and Convention Center

Butte, MT

3. Medical Laboratory Professionals Week

April 23-29th, 2023

ASCLS-MT is on social media...be sure to check us out!



Follow us to stay up on the latest news affecting our profession, conference updates, technology, government affairs and society updates.

If you have haven't already, follow us, like us and show us some love! You can also stay connected with us and other laboratorians with:

#WeSaveLivesEveryday #IAmASCLS #UnitedAgainstCOVID19 #ASCLSMT #ASCLS #Lab4Life #EveryTestIsOurPatient
#IMSS #AintItGreatInRegionEight

