



THE ORGANIZATION FOR CYTOGENETIC  
& MOLECULAR PROFESSIONALS

Date | time 6/2/2021 7:00 PM | Location Virtual

Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4235674248?pwd=L2dFbFhyb2022GEMs>

Attendees: Shree Goradia-Merchant, Jun Gu, Peter Hu, Ericka Hendrix, Amanda Cocca, Helen Bixenman, Jason Yuhas, Alan Stuart, Irene Dorocicz, Jennifer O'Leary, Heather Cole, Julie Zemlinski, Abdelhalim Elshawadfy, Denise Juroske Short

Meeting called by Shree Goradia-Merchant, AGT Education Director

Type of meeting Genetic Educators and Mentors (GEMs) Meeting

## Agenda Items

Presenter

- Call Meeting to Order at 7:14 pm EDT  
Introduction  
Review 2021 Notes  
Shree Goradia-Merchant
  
- Cytogenetic Shortage Discussion Update  
Discussions centered on  
Denise Juroske Short
  1. Training: How and where cytogenetics technologists are trained (national training programs, healthcare system programs, in-house training) and the need to standardize these learning programs into a more collaborative effort?
  2. Career awareness and recruiting efforts: How did technologists become aware of the field? Can ASCP and AGT assist in increased awareness and professional visibility? Is it beneficial to partner with community colleges, MLT programs, and BSc graduates to attract

students?

3. Employee satisfiers: What is the best way to attract and retain technologists (remote options, salary equity (regional / discipline specific)?

Actions

- Short term: Survey to formalize the staff shortage, to be shared with advocacy groups and individual institutions.
- Long term: Increase awareness to the field, combine cytogenetic and molecular training, increase recruitment and funding for recruitment.

A follow up meeting was held at the American Cytogenetics Conference on Hilton Head Island, SC on March 2022. A future meeting is planned in conjunction with the Cancer Genomics Consortium in St. Louis, MO later this summer.

Jun Gu provided additional information on the ACC meeting held on March 18, 2022. Around 300 meeting attendees were in attendance. Greater than 90% indicted difficulties with filling cytogenetic Technologist positions. Meeting was led by Yasmine Akkari and Bob Best. Discussions centered around increasing awareness of the profession and establishing a pipeline through universities and colleges.

Educational Program Updates

Summary of NAACLS Education Program Survey

Denise Juroske Short

<p><b>Irene Dorocicz</b>, BCIT Clinical Genetics Technology (Program Faculty), BC, Canada</p>	<p>Dual certification CA program; in-person rotations; 100% pass rate on CA certification exam; new building</p>
<p><b>Jennifer O’Leary</b>, Michener Institute Genetics Technology (Program Faculty), Toronto, Canada</p>	<p>Dual certification CA program; hybrid instruction; in-person rotations; 100% pass rate on CA certification exam; 16 current students with a goal of increasing; CA is experiencing shortages also</p>
<p><b>Heather Cole</b>, Royal University Hospital</p>	<p>Need for technologists but funding is not available; work</p>

Program Directors / Representatives

(Supervisor) Saskatoon, Canada	load increased by 50% with no staff increase
<b>Amanda Cocca</b> , Hamilton Health Sciences (Manager) Hamilton, Canada	Lab has 7 opens out of 30 technologists; recruitment is needed
<b>Jun Gu</b> , UT MD Anderson School of Health Professions (Program Director) Houston, TX	CGT program; 15 current students and 10 juniors + 20 seniors planned for next year; program is currently hybrid with on campus labs
<b>Ericka Hendrix</b> , Texas Tech University (Program Director), Lubbock, TX	Molecular master's program; 25 current students; 29 students last year; decrease is due to fewer applicants this year; program is fully face-to-face; shift to every other week labs
<b>Julie Zemlinski</b> , Florida Gulf Coast University (Program Director) Fort Meyers, FL	MLS and Molecular certification programs, graduated 2 students; 100% BOC pass rate; didactic is fully online, students rotate for a semester at NeoGenomics and program plans to expand to additional sites; plan to grow program
<b>Abdelhalim Elshawadfy</b> , AHRI Agriculture Research Center (Researcher) Egypt	Private academy offers courses for certification; 100 students attended for MLS; also offering Molecular Biology course and Molecular Specialty course
<b>Peter Hu</b> , UT MD Anderson School of Health Professions (Program Director) Houston, TX	MGT program; 17 undergraduate students and 7-9 graduate students; capacity for 35 undergraduates; due to pandemic the program has more than enough rotations sites with some paying students

New Business

1. Are there any constraints or limitations that your educational program is facing, such as securing and retaining rotation sites, attracting more students? Has your program instituted any incentives to assist in these struggles?
  - Cytogenetics is not as well-known as molecular
  - Pipeline from colleges would be helpful
  - Retention needed due to retirement and few experienced replacements
  - Only about 100 people took CG ASCP exam this year
  - New training programs needed
  - Assistance for on the job training needs to be set up (ASCP Route 2 and 3)
  - Cross training between MGT / CGT should be considered
  - Programs need recruiting assistance
  - Shared marketing video would be helpful
  - Molecular job descriptions need clarification / more consistency and improved communication
  
2. What still needs to be improved in the clinical genetics classroom and clinical genetics laboratory setting to effectively create and/or maintain and continue an environment in which students and new graduates further their knowledge-base and technical skills, so they can be an asset to the institution and to themselves? What curriculum or skills are missing from new graduates?
  - Interpretation missing in CG curriculum
  - MGT continues to evolve with new technologies and it becomes hard to pick and choose the important ones, while continuing to teach the basics and expanding to bioinformatics and other applications
  - AGT has the largest CGT database; lab director information is needed for outreach
  - Prior to 1999 CA technologists did not become dually certified; this group needs resources for cross-training
  
3. How can AGT better assist this community of educators, mentors, and students?
  - A video describing the professions (1 for Cytogenetics and 1 for Molecular Genetics) would be helpful for recruiting
  - Opening the Cytogenetic program director requirements to allow Molecular directors to hold the positions (with cytogenetic faculty) could assist in cross-training or new programs – NAACLS recommendation would be needed
  - AGT to assist in recruiting by promoting the profession

Presenter

- at colleges / universities, also specifically at science societies and groups
- Expand director directory for better outreach

Adjourn Meeting at 8:00 pm EDT

Shree Goradia-Merchant

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## Other Information

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