



# The Pennsylvania Newsletter

Official Publication of the American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science-Pennsylvania  
"Your Professional Organization for over Seventy Years"

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## Message from the President

**Travis Bicher**  
ASCLS-PA President

**If you have renewed your membership, we thank you!  
If you have not, this may be your last issue.  
Go to [www.ascls.org](http://www.ascls.org) and renew your membership today!**

Happy New Year to all the ASCLS-PA members out there! I hope that everyone was able to have safe celebrations with friends and family for the holidays. COVID-19 has restricted such visits for me quite a bit over the past couple years, but a triple-dose of vaccine has done a lot to assuage my concerns of spreading it to loved ones. I'm grateful for my health and that of my immediate family, but also sad for those who are dealing with illness and its fallout.

Times are tough for everyone right now, including the clinical laboratory. At October's Legislative Symposium, our Executive Vice President Jim Flanigan shared some statistics from the American Society for Clinical Pathology's survey on job satisfaction and burnout among laboratory professionals: 37.2% of respondents were dissatisfied with their position, 53.4% have high stress levels, and 85% reported feeling overwhelmed to some degree! He also noted that healthcare hiring dropped by 17,500 jobs in September and that by October, nearly 1 in 5 healthcare workers had quit their job since the beginning of

the pandemic.

I'm sure we've all felt the effects of this in our labs. People retiring earlier or moving into more lucrative work as traveling technologists, leaving a schedule full of holes and hours of overtime for those remaining. Tensions between coworkers and between the lab and hospital management over wages and acknowledgment of hard work done. Difficulty finding new hires as the already small pool of medical professionals has shrunk. We need help!

Effectively getting that help is a skill and a process that happens to the theme in the December issue of ASCLS Today: advocacy, advocacy, advocacy! This volume was chock full of ways that you as a professional can push for change, whether that's reminding administrators at your hospital to give the laboratory a hand during Lab Week, or collaborating to write news articles, giving the public a glimpse at the people behind all this COVID testing. Check it out here: [ascls.org/ascls-today](http://ascls.org/ascls-today) (Volume 35 Number 6).

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**The Pennsylvania Newsletter is the official publication of  
The American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science – Pennsylvania**

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*Past President: Marianne Downes*

*Editor: Jonathan Myer*

*Editorial Staff: The ASCLS-PA Board of Directors*

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Of course, I've already mentioned an obvious way to advocate on behalf of the profession. I attended the annual Legislative Symposium this past October, alongside Stephanie Noblit, our resident Gov't Affairs Committee member, and Heather Herrington, a relatively new member of the profession (Past-President Marianne Downes was also there for her home state of West Virginia). Working together, we set up and had great meetings with the offices of Pennsylvania's Senators, as well as three Representatives on key Congressional committees, and presented a strong case based on facts and personal stories.

The Symposium serves to prepare you well for conversations with legislators (and anyone else) by covering the current state of the government and the issues facing the profession, while giving CE credits and opportunity to network with other laboratory professionals. The new hybrid live/virtual option (which may stick around for future meetings) also made attending easier and more affordable, and with so many Congressional offices opting for virtual meetings, you could do all your advocacy from the comfort of home!

There are two big issues that are at the forefront of ASCLS's lobbying work right now, the clinical laboratory workforce shortage and cuts to the lab's Medicare reimbursement. Of course, we're all familiar with the former, and two avenues are currently being pursued to address it:

1.) HR5602, the BIO Preparedness Workforce Act of 2021, which is a novel bill insofar as it names clinical laboratory technologists and technicians specifically in its proposal, which is repayment of student loans in exchange for 3 years of service in an underserved area as part of infectious disease diagnosis,

study, and prevention. While it was discussed in committee during the Symposium, the bill has not moved forward.

2.) Establishment of a federal grant program for allied health professions (including medical laboratory science) so that they can directly get the money they need to recruit more faculty and take on more students.

As to the Medicare cuts, these stem from the implementation of the Protecting Access to Medicare Act (PAMA) of 2014. This involved a data collection process on the cost of various laboratory tests to reset the clinical laboratory fee schedule, the amount of reimbursement healthcare institutions receive from Medicare Part B for tests performed.

The initial data was flawed due to the gross overrepresentation of large, independent laboratories (90% of the data despite only representing 48% of utilization of these dollars), which have an economy of scale to allow for much lower costs than any hospital lab, and it has resulted in a series of deep reimbursement cuts. These rates also set the bar for private insurance companies, piling on the hurt, which is especially devastating for laboratories in rural and underserved areas, and may result in closures and more centralization that delays patient testing. We pitched alternate methodology to members of Congress for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to employ, while countering the notion that laboratories are becoming rich off of COVID-19 testing.

Fortunately, thanks in part to the efforts of ASCLS members across the nation in sending 1,600 letters to members of Congress through the Labvocate Action

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We can be found at:

<https://www.facebook.com/#!/ASCLSPennsylvania>

or just search for ASCLS Pennsylvania.



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Center, a new set of cuts that was to take effect January 1, 2022, was pushed back a year via S.610, the Protecting Medicare and American Farmers from Sequester Cuts Act. We can make a difference if we try! Unfortunately, this is only temporary and doesn't do anything about cuts already made. It's down to us to make the case for our importance not only to the government, but to the institutions we serve that the laboratory is a worthwhile investment.

I know though that a lot of us though don't feel comfortable advocating for ourselves. While historically associated with those with disabilities ensuring their proper treatment, self-advocacy is a learned skill that can be useful for any persons or groups without the ideal amount of public recognition and support. At its core, self-advocacy means having a strong understanding of your values and needs, and effectively communicating that to others. For example, laboratorians value producing accurate and timely results and need various things like reagents, PPE, and sufficient staffing to accomplish this.

Frequently this involves putting these values and needs into the context of a larger group, such as a workplace or professional organization, which might have the resources needed to help, or may also be struggling with shortages in supplies or manpower.

Either way, building a support system is key, and these are a couple ways to do that:

- 1.) Connect with individuals of many backgrounds and circumstances. Our profession is multicultural and diverse, and we can all expect to see more travelers from across the nation and abroad to cope with workforce shortages. Having multiple perspectives and experiences at the table when tackling an issue can only be valuable.
- 2.) Advocate for others. This should arouse less anxiety or embarrassment than speaking up for yourself, and the people you help today will likely be allies for the future.

Advocacy means not being alone. ASCLS can be your ally through these trying times, and any help you can give back will only improve things for everyone. My resolution as President for this year is to be a stronger advocate for the average bench tech and to provide all assistance I can to those doing the same. My wish for this year is that we'll bid goodbye to COVID-19 for good.

Either way, I hope to see you in Plymouth Meeting May 16th for the annual Spring Meeting, which after two long years is back to being an in-person event. Stay safe this year, and as ever, feel free to reach out to me at [travisbicher@gmail.com](mailto:travisbicher@gmail.com).



*ASCLS's lobbyist Patrick Cooney giving us some insight into Capitol Hill.*



*A (mostly) candid shot of ASCLS-PA's delegation meeting with a Congressional staffer. From left to right: myself, Stephanie Noblit, Heather Herrington.*



# ASCLS and ASCLS-PA Awards

**Mary M. Gourley**  
ASCLS-PA Awards Chair

Nominations are now being accepted for the following awards to be presented at the Annual Meeting in 2022.

- Dolbey Award – Member of the Year
- Estolle Grosse Award
- Corporate Award
- Lifetime Achievement Award

Each nomination must be accompanied by an essay by the nominator explaining the reason as to why the nominee is deserving of the award. There are separate nomination forms for the Dolbey Award and the Lifetime Achievement Award which must be submitted along with the essay.

The president and the Board of Directors are responsible for nominations for the Key to the Future Award. The president is responsible for submitting names for the Omicron

Sigma Award to both ASCLS and to the state Awards Chair by the deadlines.

Deadline for receipt of nomination forms is FEBRUARY 1, 2022. Please submit completed nomination form, in WORD format, electronically to Mary Gourley at [m.gourley@verizon.net](mailto:m.gourley@verizon.net) by the deadline. Incomplete forms will not be considered.

Nomination forms may be found on the website; please refer to the ASCLS-PA Handbook. Or you may contact President Travis Bicher or Mary Gourley for nomination forms. All nominations are welcome and anyone can nominate.

When submitting nominations, please submit in WORD format.

Let's have a banner year for awards 2022.

## Welcome New Members!

ASCLS-Pennsylvania would like to welcome the new members who have joined over the past few months! If you work with any of these new members, please reach out to greet our new members and show them the faces of the organization they just joined. Welcome aboard!

Tyler Ganoe	York	PA	RoseAnne Ippolito	Boothwyn	PA
Jarad Crawford	Sanatoga	PA	Lauren Harkness	Reading	PA
Elizabeth Gilfert	Reading	PA	Michelle Gehris	Bethlehem	PA
Jessica Thummel	Pennsburg	PA	McKenna Greene	Jacksonville	FL
Matthew Lien	Exton	PA	Giordan Diodato	Mount Gretna	PA
Sara Battaglia	Plymouth Landing	PA	Corene Smith	Schaefferstown	PA
Emily Grandinette	Philadelphia	PA	Nicolette Dixon	Ambler	PA
Vito Cracchiolo	Natrona Heights	PA			

Has your membership/contact/professional information changed? You can always check your membership status at [members.ascls.org](http://members.ascls.org), and update your profile information there which will update our mailing list instantly.

### ASCLS-PA T-Shirt

Show off your pride as a medical laboratory professional and ASCLS-PA member!

Order directly from [www.ASCLS-PA.org](http://www.ASCLS-PA.org)





## 2021 ASCLS-PA MLS/MLT Student Review Session Recap

**Dana Staranowski**

ASCLS-PA Developing Professional

In the past few years, ASCLS-PA has held an annual student review that allows anyone who is practicing to become a future MLS/MLT prepare on taking their ASCP Board of Certification. As students are finishing their programs, graduating, and getting ready for the start of their career, the board exam can be another intimidating task on their mind. The student review is helping students study and refresh the materials that they have been learning throughout their internships. The review session went over many subjects including blood bank, immunology, microbiology, chemistry, urinalysis, hematology, coagulation, and test taking tips.

This year's review session on June 5th, 2021 looked a little different from past reviews because the implications of COVID-19 and being socially distant. However, that did not stop ASCLS-PA from creating a review session virtually and having students assess the review over a Zoom session. This caused the review session to be able to connect students from different programs in Pennsylvania and surrounding states like New York, New Jersey, Delaware, and West Virginia. There were 76 attendees which became ASCLS-PA's largest student review session attendance thus far. Joy Gould, MS, BB(ASCP) and teaching assistant professor in the Department of Medical Laboratory Sciences and Biotechnology at Thomas Jefferson University started off the first lecture of the day discussing topics within blood bank. Joy discussed the different blood groups, the importance of each ABO system, and how to recognize antibodies to prevent any transfusion reactions that may occur in patients. Melody Botterbusch, MT(ASCP) and Clinical Instructor at Wellspan York Hospital School of MLS, started off her lecture with encouraging words for the students and a virtual pat on the back for making it this far in laboratory studies. Melody's presentation consisted of immunology questions for the students to answer including the topics of the different Hepatitis B serology markers and identification of the different types of ANA patterns. Jean Buchenhorst, MS, MLS (ASCP) CM and program

director at Pennsylvania Hospital, had a lecture consisting of an outline of different types of bacterial species and how to identify each one. Jean's lecture also included mycology and parasitology. Her lecture ended in asking different types of questions to help students understand the format on how the microbiology questions might look on the exam. Joshua Cannon, MS, MLS (ASCP) and instructor at Thomas Jefferson University challenged students with review questions to help with test taking techniques and in understanding how important reading the full question and answers are. The questions involved were about the different types of blood and bone marrow disorders as well as some main points of coagulation and its factors. Derick Lim, MS Cell Biology and Biotechnology, MLS (ASCP) and Clinical Laboratory Section Supervisor at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia continued with an in-depth analysis of chemistry related diseases and how to evaluate them. His lecture consisted of questions and pictures to explain in full detail the explanation of each answer to help student understand. After a full day of reviewing and taking notes, Emily Kamieniecki, MLS(ASCP)CM professional tissue typing technologist at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania helped encourage students about the ASCP Board of Certification exam by giving her experience when she went and took the exam when she was a graduate student. She gave excellent recommendations on how to prepare and study for the exam while not overwhelming yourself. She also gave ideas for books and online references to help students get in preparation for passing the exam.

ASCLS-PA thanks all the presenters who contributed to the student review session and working virtually this year. All the presentations and study keys helped as a study tool to all the student attendees which benefited them greatly towards the exam. Thank you to all the students who joined and participated in the review and making it a success. ASCLS-PA wishes great luck to all the future MLS/MLT's on this ASCP BOC exam and on their future careers!



# Minutes of the October 9, 2021 Board Meeting

**Barbara Snyderman**  
ACCLS-PA Secretary

**Present:** Travis Bicher, President; Gaby Peterson, Board; Jonathan Meyer, Board; Maryanne Downes, Past President, Kate Dixon, Developing Professional; Katie Franz, Board; Sharon Strauss; Diane Valentin; Mary Gourley; Scott Aikey; Stephanie Thum; Valerie Jalicke; Emily Kameniecki, Heather Harrington.

**Excused:** Barbara Snyderman, Secretary

Meeting called to order at 9:46 am by President Bicher. Introductions were made.

**Motion 1:** Downes moved that the ASCLS-PA Board of Directors approve the agenda as corrected. Hunt seconded. Motion carried.

President Bicher presented his report. He was happy to state that he has appointed both Developing and Ascending professionals for the state. The ASCLS-PA Annual Meeting is scheduled for May 15-16. Steph Noblit has indicated she will run for President in the spring. He will be sure to have all awards in by the February deadline. Zoom account has been renewed.

Secretary's report: Bicher presented the minutes from the May board meeting for Snyderman.

**Motion 2:** Hunt moved that the ASCLA-PA Board approve minutes from the ASCLS-PA Board Meeting dated May 5, 2020. Peterson seconded. Motion carried.

Scott Aikey was appointed parliamentarian.

**Treasurer's report:** Bill Hunt presented the report of the previous treasurer.

Hunt noted that the liability of \$800 was an error. The previous treasurer accidentally deposited personal funds into the society funds and that has been corrected.

**Motion 3:** Downes moved that the ASCLS-PA Board accept the treasurer's report for the period ending 8/31/2021 for the operating fund and scholarship fund and file for audit. Franz seconded. Motion carried.

Hunt presented the report for the period 9/1/2021 through 10/3/2021. There was \$568.95 paid in this budget year that were for expenses for last year, which would lower the "left over" dollars for the year. He would prefer that these be attributed to the previous year. There are also issues with "Square" that involve not knowing who sent money through the program. Zoom expenses will be moved to the Zoom line item from O&A.

**Motion 4:** Downes moved that the ASCLS-PA Board accept the Treasurer's report for the operating fund dated 9/1/2021 through 10/3/2021. Peterson seconded. Motion carried.

**Motion 5:** Downes moved that the ASCLS-PA Board accept the Treasurer's report for the Scholarship fund dated 9/1/2021 through 10/3/2021. Meyer seconded. Motion carried.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS:

**Awards:** Gourley stated that deadline for awards be February 1, 2022. We are "out of" wooden plaques used for some awards. She requested the board decided whether to issue paper certificates rather than wooden plaques. Consensus was to eliminate the wooden plaques due to the extreme cost of the plaques and shipping to recipients.

**Bylaws:** Gourley said there was nothing needed from the state regarding bylaws.

Ascending Professional: Written report attached. Included report from the Student Review Session in June.

**Career recruitment:** Jean Buchenhorst was not present. No report received. Emily reported that she has assisted students applying for their clinical internships. She also spoke to a group of high school students about careers in the laboratory. She stated that there has been more discussion about colleges shutting down MLS programs and Emily wrote a letter in support of keeping programs.

The President commended Emily for her activism and activity.

**Con Ed Assistanceship:** Treasurer Hunt stated that there is \$400 available and he is not sure why it is still there. There have not been applicants. It can be awarded for any meeting at any time. Applications go to the treasurer.

**Education Scientific Assembly:** Report submitted from the summer meeting of the educators. There were no requests for action. There will be another meeting late May or early June 2022.

**File Custodian:** All files are safely stored in Bill Hunt's attic.

**Finance Committee:** Aikey presented his report. He received all materials from the previous treasurer and he was able to review all records. Scholarship and awards funds had no discrepancies. There were minor human errors that were corrected in the operating funds.

All balances are correct. There is \$13,670.59 left from the

*continued on next page*

operating fund which needs to be allocated.

**Motion 6:** Hunt moved that the ASCLS-PA Board accept the financial audit of the 2020-2021 year. Downes seconded. Motion carried.

**Motion 7:** Hunt moved that the ASCLS-PA Board allocate the \$13,670.59 unspent money from FY 20-21 in the following way: \$9051.48 into FY 22-23; 2068.95 into current fiscal year, and \$2550.16 into the contingency fund. Downes seconded. Motion carried.

**Government affairs:** No report.

**Membership:** Downes reported that we currently have 183 members, which is higher than usual for this time of year. Lapsed member campaign will commence shortly. We had 211 at end of last membership year. She will be calling lapsed members.

**Newsletter:** Meyer sent a written report. No requests for action. There was an issue with delivery of the last newsletter. He had to cut some content due to the length of the issue which will be included in the next newsletter.

Name change for the newsletter was discussed and a poll will be placed on the "Connect Community".

**Deadline for next newsletter:** December 1.

**PACE:** No report.

**Website:** Strauss submitted a report. She updated leadership on the website and added the T-shirts to the site. She also added the DVC leadership to the site and added minutes

from past meetings.

**Delaware Valley Chapter:** report submitted. Three educational sessions are planned, one for each season. Hematology for fall, blood bank TBD and a covid assay discussion for the spring. Also planning a sticker fundraiser.

**Old business:** 2022 Annual Meeting: Strauss sent a report. Speaker numbers are agreed to and many items will be the same as the cancelled 2021 meeting. She just received meal costs from the hotel so cost for registration will be decided shortly. Covid is still an unknown issue. Timetable has been agreed upon and want all speakers booked by early January.

**ASCLS-PA logo:** Downes has communicated with national office. Needs to follow up.

**T-shirt sales:** Ordered 100; 40 have been sold.

**Virtual CE:** Bicher said that money had been budgeted for the year for virtual CE. It can go out of O&A if sessions are scheduled. Downes suggested that if we are not charging members to attend an honorarium shouldn't be offered. Concern will be conflicts with our annual meeting in May. He will put it on hold for the time being.

**Memorial Undergraduate Scholarship:** Bicher will have the board discuss in closed session. Hunt proposed an ad-hoc committee to make recommendations on the future of the scholarship. President can create a committee and appoint members. Volunteers: Downes, Hunt, Peterson and Gourley.

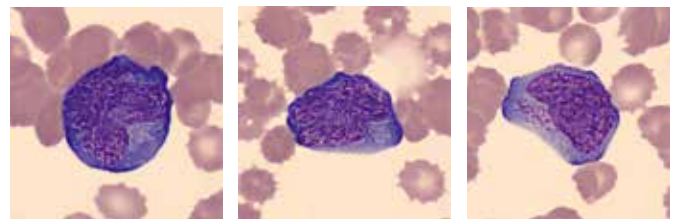
**Motion 8:** Downes moved to adjourn the meeting at 12:17 PM. Hunt seconded. Motion carried

## Case Study *Submitted by Travis Bicher*

Attempt to give a diagnosis and an effective treatment for the following case. The answer will be posted to the ASCLS-PA Facebook page.

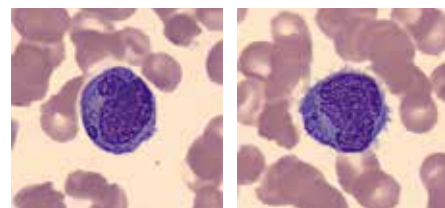
The patient is admitted with fevers, fatigue, and body aches after finding many ticks on their legs after hiking in New Jersey. They were diagnosed with severe sepsis, but their WBC count was markedly decreased ( $0.7 \times 10^3/\mu\text{L}$  at its lowest), as was their Platelet count ( $36 \times 10^3/\mu\text{L}$  at its lowest), though there was a left shift (largely as bandemia) and toxic vacuolation in those neutrophils that could be found.

Examination of the peripheral smear ruled out Babesia. Three days after admission, the WBC count had come up, and the smear was sent for review due to a suspected large number of reactive lymphocytes (27%). These cells were confirmed as such but marked concerning enough to warrant flow cytometry or bone marrow biopsy if they persisted:



*Reactive Lymphocytes from Peripheral Smear*

Also found on the smear were the following two monocytes:



*Monocytes from Peripheral Smear*



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***130 South 9th Street***  
***Edison Building, Suite 2211***  
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## Upcoming Events

### ASCLS-PA Winter Board Meeting

February 5, 2022 9:30 AM (Virtual)

Zoom Link:

<https://tinyurl.com/ASCLS-PA-WinterBM22>

Meeting ID: 876 8978 1506

Password: 995225

### 2022 ASCLS-PA and PASSAMT Annual Meeting

May 15-16, 2022

DoubleTree Suites in Plymouth Meeting, PA

### 2022 ASCLS Annual Meeting

June 27-29, 2022

Grand Rapids, MI

All members of ASCLS-PA are welcome and encouraged to attend any meeting of the Board of Directors.

To get involved, email Travis Bicher at

[travisbicher@gmail.com](mailto:travisbicher@gmail.com)

## Stay in Touch with us on our Website

Make sure you bookmark [www.ascls-pa.org](http://www.ascls-pa.org) to stay in touch with us. You can find numerous updates and information on the web site about upcoming meetings. Information is also available earlier on the Pennsylvania State Society ASCLS Connect Community forum.