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AST Position Statement on Minimum Education for Surgical Technologists

A profession's educational base is the cornerstone of its growth and development. Providing competent, humanistic, and safe patient care as a Surgical Technologist demands a broad area of knowledge and intellectual skills as well as technical proficiency. The increasing complexity of surgical therapies and the expanding role of the surgical technologist require the ability to adapt to new roles and technologies. This includes applying the skills in other healthcare facility departments demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. These increasing responsibilities demand a broadly based educational curriculum provided by accredited programs with a foundation in both the medical sciences and liberal arts. To remain on par with other health care professions, AST declares the associate degree in surgical technology to be the educational model for entry-level practice.

To maintain the expectation of students completing an associate degree, AST supports the surgical technology program accreditation processes administered by the Accreditation Review Council on Education in Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (ARC/STSA), a collaborative effort of AST and the American College Surgeons (ACS) under the auspices of the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP)and by the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES). Accreditation confirms that a program has attained the highest standards in surgical technology education, based on a curriculum that is to the benefit of patient safety, the healthcare community, and students. AST supports that surgical technology education programs should be accredited, and students should attend an accredited program to be able to learn the skills needed to provide safe, quality patient care.

Completing an accredited program ensures the graduate is eligible to take the surgical technology certification examination offered by A certifying entity that is accredited by National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA). AST declares that individuals who perform the role and duties of the surgical technologist should attain an NCCA accredited credential in surgical technology and complete an associate degree from an accredited program. Healthcare employers should take into consideration when hiring an individual that has attained the surgical technologist credential and should achieve the goal of only employing individuals with the surgical technologist credential.

It is the position of AST that the official title of health care professionals in the profession of surgical technology is "surgical technologist" that is nationally recognized by the ARC/STSA including the collaborating sponsors ACS and CAAHEP, the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES), and NCCA accredited certifying entities who award the surgical technologist credential for those who pass the national surgical technology certifying examination. The primary role of surgical technologists is the first scrub role that is an essential function as a

member of the sterile surgical team and individuals fulfilling this role are essential to successful perioperative patient outcomes. Not all healthcare facilities and organizations use the correct title of surgical technologist within the healthcare profession. Therefore, AST advocates that health care professionals who practice surgical technology be titled surgical technologist and the correct title of those who have passed the certifying examination and maintain their certification as a surgical technologist.

Therefore, be it resolved, because of the important roles that surgical technologists fulfill in the operating room as well as in other healthcare facility departments and the workforce shortage that has placed additional pressure on healthcare facilities to continue to meet the patient workload in the surgery department, it is that much more imperative that the healthcare facilities hire graduates of a surgical technology program that is programmatically accredited by an organization that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

Be it resolved, for surgical technologists to safely function in a direct patient care role, surgical technology education must maintain an elevated level of educational standards. Quality surgical technology education must, at a minimum, meet the following criteria:

- Comprehensively deliver content that is outlined in the current edition of the AST *Core Curriculum for Surgical Technology*. The program curriculum must meet the content and competencies as stated in the *Core Curriculum for Surgical Technology*.
- Demonstrate the curriculum content achieves the goals of the program. The program must have course syllabi that include the course description, the course objectives, the methods of evaluation, the topic outline, and the competencies the student must achieve to graduate from the program.
- The curriculum should be delivered by educational programs in a sequence of classroom, laboratory, and clinical activities that meet the requirements of the current edition of the AST *Core Curriculum for Surgical Technology*.
- Completion of the in-person (live), interactive Lab Skills Assessments and Clinical Rotation Case Requirements as stated in the *Core Curriculum for Surgical Technology*.
- The program length should be sufficient to ensure students can meet the program curriculum requirements.
- Maintain programmatic accreditation or in the process of seeking initial accreditation through a U.S. Department of Education or The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) approved accreditor.

Be it resolved that graduates of accredited surgical technology programs have attained a high-level of critical thinking and multitasking skills that are essential to provide safe patient care that on-the-job trained individuals will not be able to attain. Competent and humanistic practice as a surgical technologist demands a broad area of knowledge, and the development of intellectual skills combined with technical proficiency that only graduates of accredited programs can achieve.

Be it resolved, that the safest patient care can only be provided by an individual that has attained the title of "surgical technologist" who has met the educational standards of an accredited program and has successfully passed an NCCA-accredited certification credential.