

Transformation in Education and Practice

Since 2001, the American Society of Cytopathology (ASC) has been investigating the challenges within the cytology profession. Led by the Multidisciplinary Steering Group and the ASC Executive Board, this process involved surveys and consultations with peer organizations and non-pathology stakeholders. These efforts culminated with a Summit in November 2009, with the subsequent findings and recommendations published in the [Future of Cytopathology White Paper](#). A newly formed Task Force on the Future of Cytology whose members were appointed by Dr. Hormoz Ehya, ASC President, will review the findings and recommendations outlined in this White Paper.

One of the goals of the Task Force is to bring to the ASC membership the transformation currently evolving in the profession. Contributors have been invited to share their experiences, successes and challenges for this new column in *The ASC Bulletin*, Transformation in Education and Practice. This column will feature articles from training programs and laboratories that are undergoing transformation by incorporating approaches that innovate and create significant changes in what we do and how we do it. We hope you find their stories inspirational.

Our first contributor is Indra Balachandran, Ph.D., SCT(ASCP), CFIAC from the Albany College of Pharmacy & Health Sciences.

Sue Zaleski, M.A., SCT(ASCP), Co-Chair, Task Force on the Future of Cytology

Cytotechnology Program, Albany College of Pharmacy & Health Sciences, Albany, New York

Indra Balachandran, Ph.D., SCT(ASCP), CFIAC
Associate Professor and Cytotechnology Program Director

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Albania College of Pharmacy & Health Sciences' (ACPHS) Cytotechnology Program is one of the largest CAAHEP accredited programs in the country and one of two currently active Cytotechnology Programs in New York State. Currently, it is accredited for 14 students until 2014. The ACPHS Program is housed along with the Clinical Laboratory Sciences program in the Department of Health Sciences. The Program has been updated regularly for curricular content and clinical experiences based on changes experienced nationally in the profession and also based on input from our communities of interest. Until this current academic year, the program offered a four year B.S. in Biomedical Technology - Cytotechnology for undergraduates and a one year Post Baccalaureate Certificate in Cytotechnology for those individuals with a B.S.



**Indra Balachandran,
Ph.D., SCT, CFIAC**

Recently, the program has received approval for a five year, joint Bachelor of Science (BS)-Master of Science (MS) in Biotechnology-Cytotechnology track, a five semester MS in Cytotechnology and Molecular Cytology and a three semester MS in Biotechnology for practicing cytotechnologists and other laboratory diagnosticians with a part-time option. The curriculum has undergone major changes to reflect New York State licensure requirements as well as changes in cytology practice. The MS programs have been structured in such a way to provide the students all the entry level competencies mandated by CAAHEP (CPRC) for cytotechnologists, to provide a sound theoretical and practical

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understanding of molecular diagnostics, and to prepare the students for the CT(ASCP) Board of Certification exam, with the option of taking the MB(ASCP) certification. Also, it will provide a foundation in the areas such as Digital Imaging and Morphometrics, Cellular Pathophysiology and Histology, Research Methods and Statistics, Management, and Medical Ethics and Research.

All the courses are offered through Blackboard Course management system. The Cytotechnology Program utilizes many innovative teaching methods including educational games, educational wiki, blogs and online discussion tools. The driving forces for change emanate from ongoing changes in cytology practice and the body of knowledge along with needs of Communities of Interest (COI). The Cytotechnology Program Advisory Committee has a major representation from COI including our clinical affiliates, employers of our graduates, alumni and public at large. The Committee meets at least once a year to review changes in the Program, performances of our graduates and needs of the COI. Their recommendations are incorporated into the curriculum at the earliest.

The student recruitment is mainly done by the Program Director locally and regionally by visiting many of the colleges and universities and giving presentations. The Program also has academic articulation with two local colleges where students from those colleges spend three years in their respective campuses and two years at ACPHS, thereby earning the BS from their home institution and an MS in Cytotechnology and Molecular Cytology from ACPHS. The most effective recruitment tool is face-to-face meeting of interested applicants with the Program Director and maintaining email contact with interested applicants.

The Program has support from the college administration. Reflecting the College's commitment to Diagnostic Medicine, the College changed its name, after 127 years, from the Albany College of Pharmacy to ACPHS. Reflecting this investment in laboratory sciences, ACPHS is currently establishing 2,100 square feet for two teaching laboratories and has made significant capital purchases to support training in molecular diagnostics, microscopy and tissue culture. The greatest challenge is getting enough qualified applicants into the program every year, although international interest has recently grown. As the only academically-based program in New York State, the Program is cultivating new partnerships through articulation and affiliation agreements with colleges and universities. In addition, possible satellite programs and online course offerings with flexible laboratory scheduling for working individuals are being developed.

ACPHS' Cytotechnology Program is registered with New York State Department of Education. Our graduates enjoy the privilege of obtaining New York State licensure after successful completion of ASCP-BOC examination and completing the paperwork with the necessary dues for licensure. The Program has been and will continue to institute changes in the curriculum based on changes in cytology practice regionally and nationally. ■



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