

MEDICAL LABORATORY ASSISTANT/TECHNICIAN DUTIES

The duties listed below are directly from a guidance document prepared by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Laboratories Branch regarding laboratory technician duties (June 1996).

LABORATORY TECHNICIANS

Section 1 of Ontario Regulation 682 defines a “laboratory technician” as a person who under direct supervision performs laboratory tests which require limited technical skill and responsibilities.

In accordance with this, a laboratory technician may, under the direct supervision of an appropriately qualified Medical Laboratory Technologist (MLT), Respiratory Therapist (RT), Medical Radiation Technologist (MRT), laboratory supervisor or laboratory director, perform laboratory tests which require limited technical skill and responsibilities and which do not require interpretation, assessment or the exercise of independent judgment. Specific work assignments should only be undertaken subsequent to thorough training and instruction by qualified supervisory personnel. A technician functions in accordance with predetermined criteria, which are used to recognize unexpected results, errors and problems. Any such difficulties or problems encountered during the performance of the day’s work must be brought to the immediate attention of the personnel providing supervision.

A technician’s duties may include the following:

- blood sample procurement
- sample preparation for analysis, e.g., separation, numbering (including referral specimens)
- reagent preparation
- media preparation, smear preparation, i.e. blood films
- staining of smears
- cover slipping of slide preparation
- concentration of stool samples for parasitology examinations
- planting and streaking of microbiology specimens and controls, including set up of anaerobic and CO₂ jars, for reading by a MLT
- subculturing of stock cultures in bacteriology
- titrations using a pH meter
- urinalysis (excluding microscopic)
- recording quality control results for interpretation and approval by qualified staff as listed above
- operation of automated instruments after proper functioning has been established by qualified staff as listed above
- set up of erythrocyte sedimentation rates
- set up of micro hematocrits
- set up of serology tests, e.g., occult blood, pregnancy test (to be read and interpreted immediately by a MLT)
- routine equipment maintenance
- temperature monitoring of thermally controlled equipment
- transcription of results from worksheets to reports
- filing of records and retrieval of files
- glassware washing, housekeeping
- preparation of kits

The above-noted list is not intended to be all-inclusive. It is recognized that there may be other laboratory activities that do not require interpretation, assessment or the exercise of independent judgment, which may be carried out by a laboratory technician.