



The board of directors of BCSLS sent a letter to the Minister of Health Services in October 2003 and another letter to the Editor, Vancouver SUN. The text of the two letters is reproduced below.

Letter to Hon. Colin Hansen, 17 October 2003

Honourable Colin Hansen
Minister of Health Services
PO Box 9050, STN PROV GOVT
Victoria BC V8W 9E2

Dear Mr. Minister:

We would like an opportunity to address statements you made during a television appearance (October 1, 2003) on Shaw TV regarding the reorganization of laboratory services.

In the TV broadcast, you referred to the significant role to be played by automation in the re-organization of laboratory services. We understand the focus of your response was primarily on the physician's role and fee for service payment arrangements. However, we are concerned that you may view automation as the solution to all laboratory issues. The advance of technology has enabled amazing advances in automation – and these advances have been welcomed by our members. But automation has its limits and many tests cannot be performed in large batches. Automation also brings its own challenges in the form of requirements for sophisticated test oversight and support services. There are also many “stat” tests which must be performed on site with results available immediately.

Although the physician/administrator focus is on the test result itself, we would like to stress that the result is only as good as the sample and testing process. The test result will be meaningless unless a sample is properly obtained, processed, stored and identified. There are also several important intangible elements essential to a sustainable medical laboratory system; the system must support clinical education and research and enable its professionals to interact with all members of the health care team.

BCSLS has made recent submissions on the laboratory review process. Our primary interest is the contribution of our members to patient-centred health care. We believe laboratory services should

- be guided by responsible use management policies,
- support evidence-based health care approaches, and
- be conducted in accredited facilities by regulated professionals.

We've enclosed a copy of our June 2002 submission on the Future of BC's Diagnostic Laboratory System.

We would be pleased to provide additional information or answer questions on our profession.

Yours sincerely,
BRITISH COLUMBIA SOCIETY OF LABORATORY SCIENCE

per

Cheryl Dosen
President
cc: Hon. Sindi Hawkins, Minister of Health Planning
Enclosure: Future of BC's Diagnostic Laboratory Services

Letter to Editor, Vancouver SUN, 21 October 2003

The Editor
Vancouver SUN
1-200 Granville Street
Vancouver, BC V6C 3N3

Dear Sir:

BCSLS is a provincial professional association of medical laboratory technologists and assistants representing a workforce that is 5,000 strong. Our members work in the private and public sectors and we recognize the different strengths and contribution of both delivery systems to good patient care.

The board of BCSLS has been carefully following the Ministry of Health Services' initiatives to review and re-organize the delivery of laboratory services. There have been significant changes in the health regions in delivery of laboratory services and more are planned for the provincial system. These changes will have an important impact on patient care.

The goal of the medical laboratory is to deliver the right test at the right time by trained personnel in an accredited laboratory. The medical laboratory provides over 70% of the data in a patient's chart yet accounts for only between 4-8% of health care costs.

We understand why patients are focused only on the test result itself. The laboratory is usually invisible – so we need to stress that the result is only as good as the sample and testing process. No matter how sophisticated the instrument, the old saying still holds true “garbage in = garbage out”. The test result will be meaningless unless a sample is properly obtained, processed, stored and identified.

We believe it is essential laboratory services be delivered by a system which supports clinical education for students, adheres to quality assurance procedures and uses appropriately trained individuals in accredited facilities.

Our members want to provide excellent patient-centred health care. In order to do this, we believe laboratory services should

- be guided by responsible use management policies,
- support evidence-based health care approaches, and
- be conducted in accredited facilities by regulated professionals.

Our Society will continue to lobby for the development of medical laboratory services which meet these criteria.

Yours sincerely,

BRITISH COLUMBIA SOCIETY OF LABORATORY SCIENCE

per

Cheryl Dosen

President