



College of Medical
Laboratory Technologists
of Ontario

Scope of Practice Statement

Registered Medical Laboratory Technician Draft Scope of Practice Statement

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INTRODUCTION

The College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Ontario (CMLTO) is the regulatory body for the province's 7700 medical laboratory technologists. In 1993, medical laboratory technologists, like nurses, doctors, dentists, physiotherapists and 19 other health care professions, became regulated under Ontario's *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991*. Regulatory Colleges, such as the CMLTO, exist to serve and protect the public interest and ensure the highest standards of health care through regulation of these professions.

Through discussions with medical laboratory technologists, assistants and technicians over the last three years, the College recognizes that the regulation of medical laboratory assistants and medical laboratory technicians has grown in importance. Based largely on member feedback, CMLTO Council included the regulation of medical laboratory assistants and medical laboratory technicians as one of its priorities in the 2009-2011 Strategic Plan.

The CMLTO announced the formation of a Regulation of Medical Laboratory Assistants and Medical Laboratory Technicians Advisory Working Group (AWG) in June 2010. The AWG contributes to the goal of regulating medical laboratory assistants and medical laboratory technicians in the interest of public protection. Members of the AWG influence the process of regulating medical laboratory assistants and medical laboratory technicians, and are guided by specific objectives, which are set for each phase of the initiative.

Why does the CMLTO identify this group of medical laboratory technology practitioners as "registered medical laboratory technicians"?

Through the CMLTO's focus group sessions with members, College staff has met with medical laboratory practitioners who are referred to as 'technicians', 'assistants', and 'attendants' in their workplaces. The CMLTO also heard from MLTs, medical laboratory assistants and medical laboratory technicians that regardless of the titles used in the workplace, medical laboratory assistants and medical laboratory technicians perform a very broad range of responsibilities which are employer-specific. To be inclusive, the CMLTO referred to this group of health professionals as medical laboratory assistants and medical laboratory technicians. While a variety of titles are currently used to denote this group of health care practitioners, the CMLTO believes that it would be advisable to choose one representative title for future use, with a defined scope of practice. It has been suggested that "Registered Medical Laboratory Technician" be adopted as the professional title to denote those individuals who would meet criteria for inclusion on the CMLTO voluntary roster for medical laboratory assistants and medical laboratory technicians.



Why is a scope of practice statement for registered medical laboratory technicians important to medical laboratory technology practitioners?

Medical laboratory assistants and medical laboratory technicians have diverse educational and preparatory backgrounds as they come into the clinical laboratory. A scope of practice statement for medical laboratory assistants and technicians is a foundational and fundamental part of the regulation of medical laboratory assistants and medical laboratory technicians as it outlines the scope of responsibilities of those practitioners the CMLTO is addressing. In 2011, the main focus of the regulation of medical laboratory assistants and medical laboratory technicians initiative will be the delineation of criteria and establishment of processes for medical laboratory assistants and medical laboratory technicians to apply for inclusion on a CMLTO voluntary roster.

How was this draft scope of practice statement developed?

The CMLTO believes that understanding what a certain cadre of laboratory professionals does (i.e. scope of practice) and what impact this has on patient care is as important as the nomenclature used to describe these professionals. Therefore, through 2010 and early 2011, the CMLTO's Regulation of Medical Laboratory Assistants and Technicians Advisory Working Group (AWG) was consulted to assist in the formulation of a draft scope of practice statement for Registered Medical Laboratory Technicians. This draft scope of practice statement was presented to, and supported by the CMLTO Council in February 2011.



SCOPE OF PRACTICE STATEMENT

A scope of practice statement is intended to describe the sphere of activities and responsibilities that a health practitioner is capable of assuming through the application of their own unique knowledge, skills and judgement.

Working towards the regulation of medical laboratory assistants and medical laboratory technicians requires a clearly defined scope of practice. This will enhance effective interprofessional collaboration between medical laboratory technologists, medical laboratory assistants and medical laboratory technicians by reducing the need for interpretation of scopes of practice. The relationship between the scope of practice of an MLT and a medical laboratory assistant and technician is discussed in Appendix A.

Draft Scope of Practice Statement

In the practice of Medical Laboratory Technology, registered medical laboratory technicians collect, process, and evaluate the adequacy of specimens taken on and from the human body and perform non-complex processes for the purpose of laboratory investigations.

Scope of Practice Statement Components

A scope of practice statement can be further broken down into three components: breadth, focus, and depth.

Breadth – The extent and/or limits of service provision.

“...collect, process, and evaluate the adequacy of...” is interpreted to mean that the scope of practice for a registered medical laboratory technician includes:

- Collection of body fluids, including quality control for collection processes;
- Receipt, registration, sorting, batching, and specimen referral processes, including quality control for the above processes; and
- Preparation and processing of the specimens for further laboratory investigations, including quality control for the above processes.

Further, that the professional practice of registered medical laboratory technicians would be guided by the CMLTO Code of Ethics.



Focus – The target of service provision.

“...specimens taken on or from the human body...” is interpreted to recognize that registered medical laboratory technicians have a tremendous amount of patient contact, especially when involved in phlebotomy. As well, registered medical laboratory technicians are an integral part of the clinical laboratory team and the outcome of their work directly flows into and affects the work of medical laboratory technologists. Therefore, the target of a registered medical laboratory technician’s service provision includes:

- Patients that require specimen collection; and
- Health professionals involved in the performance of laboratory investigations and analysis of these specimens.

Depth – The complexity of service provision.

“...perform non-complex processes for the purpose of laboratory investigations ...” is interpreted to recognize that varying degrees of judgement is required when performing all laboratory procedures. Judgement can be re-interpreted for greater precision to mean complexity and/or variability. The depth of service provision can be further broken down into the phases of laboratory testing (preanalytical, analytical and postanalytical) and associated laboratory processes including inventory control, quality control, and equipment maintenance.



SUMMARY

The regulation of a new health care profession is a multi-year initiative requiring focused and sustained effort. One key component of the regulation of medical laboratory assistants and medical laboratory technicians is the clear identification of which practitioners the CMLTO is addressing in this initiative. The draft scope of practice for “Registered Medical Laboratory Technicians” will help define the criteria and establish the processes for medical laboratory assistants and medical laboratory technicians to apply for inclusion on a CMLTO voluntary roster.

The CMLTO encourages medical laboratory technologists, medical laboratory assistants, medical laboratory technicians, and other stakeholders in the health care system to become, and remain, engaged with the CMLTO on this important initiative. The most up-to-date information on this initiative can be found on the new Regulation of Medical Laboratory Assistants and Medical Laboratory Technicians website, accessible from www.cmlto.com, which is dedicated to sharing information and gathering feedback about the regulation of medical laboratory assistants and medical laboratory technicians in Ontario.

The CMLTO invites medical laboratory technologists, assistants and technicians, and other stakeholders to access information, sign up for updates, offer feedback and request the CMLTO meet with you to discuss this initiative.



Appendix A: Relationship between the scope of practice of an MLT and a medical laboratory assistant and technician

In the case of medical laboratory technology, the scope of practice for medical laboratory technologists (MLTs) has already been described in Ontario through the *Medical Laboratory Technology Act, 1991*.

Medical laboratory assistants and medical laboratory technicians work closely with MLTs. The scope of practice for medical laboratory assistants and medical laboratory technicians can be visualized as a subset of a broader MLT scope of practice.

Scope of Practice: Medical Laboratory Technologist

The practice of medical laboratory technology is the performance of laboratory investigations on the human body or on specimens taken from the human body and the evaluation of the technical sufficiency of the investigations and their results.

Draft Scope of Practice: Registered Medical Laboratory Technician

In the practice of Medical Laboratory Technology, registered medical laboratory technicians collect, process, and evaluate the adequacy of specimens taken on and from the human body and perform non-complex processes for the purpose of laboratory investigations.

