Non-Traditional Roles of the Pathologists’ Assistant

Design functions for PathAs to support the practice

Updated 06.03.2021

A Think Tank Advancing Best Practices for Pathology and Laboratory Medicine
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager/Supervisor of AP Section</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety Officer</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Face of the Practice”</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client Service Representative</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Chair/Pathologists</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Functions</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation and Inspections</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT Functions</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice/Hospital Website</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overview

1. **PathAs** are highly trained allied health professionals who bring value to a pathology practice.

2. **PathAs** are complementary to pathologists, with no intention or ability to replace them, and can fill a gap in the pathology workforce shortage.

3. In addition to traditional roles at the grossing bench or in the autopsy suite, **PathAs** can also undertake non-traditional roles in the laboratory.

4. These innovative and creative roles have potential to evolve the **PathA** profession while bringing value to pathology practices, that may be realized as:
   a. Increased time
   b. Quality
   c. Revenue
   d. Reputation

5. While each practice has different needs, we have compiled some of the non-traditional roles where **PathAs** can enhance the efficiency of Pathologists’ work product.
Manager/Supervisor of AP Section

**General responsibilities for the manager of the AP section:**

1. Scheduling and training other PathAs
2. Day to day supervision of the Gross Room personnel
   a. Maintenance
   b. Quality control for equipment
   c. Cleanliness
   d. Providing guidance
3. Ordering gross room supplies
4. Inventory management
5. Specimen tracking
   Tracking, triaging, and workflow in the grossing lab and for intraoperative consultations
6. Performance reviews of all AP staff
   a. Registrars
   b. Accessioners
   c. Secretaries/administrative support
The PathA may serve as Safety Officer for the whole department or just the AP section.

Tasks include:

1. Oversight of chemicals
   a. Maintain Inventory
   b. Recycle xylene and formalin
   c. Determine and implement best practices

2. Maintenance of MSDS (material safety data sheets) documents

3. Safety rounds in the Department to ensure:
   a. The environment is safe
   b. Adequate PPE is available and in use

4. Assure safety protocols are current and pertinent
PathAs as the “face of the practice”

1. Promoting and enhancing the services provided by the Pathologists to the community.

2. Participation in department/lab meetings and coordinating rounds

3. Acquiring and maintaining business:
   a. Ambulatory surgi-centers
   b. Physician offices
   c. POL’s
   d. Outpatient service centers

4. Liaison between the Practice and referring physicians
   1. Continually improving logistics

5. The PathA will primarily represent the anatomic pathology services but can also be trained to represent the clinical laboratory.
The PathAs client service role includes:

1. Visits to referring offices
   a. Routine visits to assess their needs and satisfaction with services
   b. Ordering supplies as needed
   c. Deliver supplies such as requisitions and specimen collection containers

2. Client follow-up
   a. Ensure responsive turnaround time of results
   b. Satisfaction with courier services

3. Satisfaction surveys
   a. Design and implement client surveys
   b. Leading to improved services and satisfaction

4. Prompt resolution of service issues
   a. Make follow-up calls
   b. Resolve service complaints
   c. Provide necessary guidance on specimen collection and storage
1. Prepare and review protocols in Anatomic Pathology and Autopsy service

2. Routinely collect, collate and present quality data to Chair for audits and monitoring
   a. Turnaround time (TAT) for Pathologists
   b. Frozen section TAT
   c. Cytology-histology correlation

3. Gather data for administrative reports, including annual reports or hospital quality dashboards

4. Review of billing codes for effective compliance and income maximization
   a. PathAs review the daily billing reports
   b. Consult the Pathologist for discrepancies
   c. This support can free the Pathologist’s time for expanded clinical services
Educational Functions

1. Prepare materials for tumor boards
   a. Reports
   b. Slides
   c. Photomicrographs of the slides

2. In academic institutions, PathAs:
   a. Provide training for junior residents
   b. Schedule residents to attend conferences and tumor boards
Support for the accreditation and inspection process can be provided by the PathA:

1. Review the questions
2. Collect pertinent documentation
3. Ensure that all documents and QC data are available
4. Maintain inspection readiness
   a. Review protocols
   b. Make sure staff are aware of regulations
   c. Update relevant changes
5. Perform “mock” inspection of the section to determine preparedness of Department
IT Functions for AP LIS

PathA designated as “Superuser” of AP system:

1. Initial and ongoing training

2. Support other staff and resolve problems they encounter with upgrades

3. Serve as a point person for optimizing IT functionality
   a. Create shortcut texts for the gross room
   b. Troubleshoot malfunctions
   c. Provide local training and direction

4. Maintain and update files in the AP system

5. Transcription or dictation services
   a. Evaluation, purchase, and management of these services (human or automated)
Practice/Hospital Website

Develop, coordinate and update the websites:

1. Provide content:
   a. Services offered
   b. Hours of operation
   c. Contact information for Pathologists, billing and client service representatives
   d. Specimen collection requirements
   e. Biographies of the Pathologists/PhD's, the PathAs and other pertinent staff
   f. Insurance plans accepted by the practice/hospital
   g. Billing policies

2. To evaluate best practice websites to update and change contents
1. Continually improve collateral
2. Post news, blog entries and important updates for the practice/department
3. Respond to social media inquiries and comments
4. Coordinate with practice/hospital marketing and sales