

## New Professionals and New Members Forum E-Newsletter

### Employment, Unemployment, and Back Again

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My husband and I recently moved from Honolulu, Hawaii to Pasadena, California for the start of his graduate school career. The move was filled with excitement for our new home, but also sadness from leaving Hawaii and the friends we made. The hardest part was leaving my job at Queen's Hospital as a Molecular Genetic Technologist—The place where my career as a lab scientist began! It will always hold a special place in my heart. I worked in a small lab and my co-workers were like family. Our lab was a true team effort. My last day of work was heart wrenching for me.

Prior to the move, I was not able to secure a job in California. It was disappointing and scary. Thoughts began to run through my head-- What do you do when you're not working? Why had I

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#### *Keep Calm and Put your Lab Coat On*

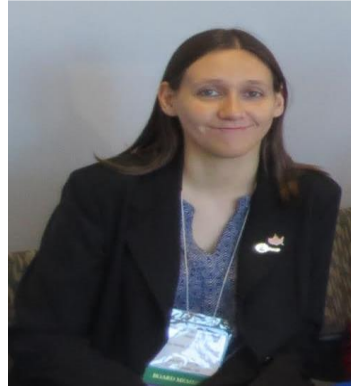
not received any callbacks? How long will it be before I find a job? Will I forget my lab skills? – Those were a few of the thoughts which came to mind. I filled my mornings with many cups of coffee, continuous job searching, and numerous calls with staffing agencies and recruiters. However, at the end of the day I was still left without an interview. It felt as though all my applications and phone calls were going into a black hole and no one could find them! I turned my disappointment and

## **Holiday Scheduling for Medical Laboratories during the Holiday Season**

*Social Media Survey between Facebook and reddit subreddit/r/medlabprofessionals*

**By: Ally Storla, MLS(ASCP)<sup>CM</sup>, Region III Communication Coordinator**

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I recently asked the Facebook group New Medical Laboratory Professionals (ASCP) and Reddit's /r/medlabprofessionals "How does your laboratory handle holiday scheduling for this time of year?" I am interested in this topic as I have had many jobs that coincided with holiday work and creating a schedule that is 'fair' is a very difficult task.

The holidays are stressful and as someone who has spent many Christmas mornings cleaning up after dogs and cats working in a kennel, I can appreciate how important it is to share the workload. Some of the newer people working in the laboratory often, unfortunately, get thrown under the bus and get more than their fair share – one respondent is working every holiday their first year. For those of us starting out, we often find ourselves working Christmas right out of the gate.

The most common approach to scheduling seems to be sharing and rotating holidays, which speaks to strong teamwork. My current hospital utilizes a major/minor holiday per year with the option to work more for those who like the holiday pay rate bumps. This seems fairly common based on the responses with many hospitals using rotation teams, requiring 1 or 2 major holidays per year and 1 or 2 minor holidays per year. Some hospitals utilize volunteers and some utilize 'if it falls on your shift you're working it' approach. Ultimately, the route your hospital goes needs to be a way that works for the team and balances the holidays as fairly as possible. This is never easy-- but it is very important to keep certain team members from feeling like they are always left holding the bag.

Be sure to thank your team members who work holidays and try to be a team player

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## Six Ways to Reduce Stress During a Crazy Day in the Lab

By: New Professionals and New Members Forum Members

1. Focus on one thing at a time - if you're in hematology and you have a pile of urines, a pile of coags, and a pile of CBCs, tackle one thing before moving onto the next. Load the CBCs, then spin the coags, then do the urines. This prevents running around and you save energy!  
- Vathani Logendran

2. Teamwork and Communication. The lab is not just individual sections. Help your coworkers and remember to ask for help when you need it. You are all working towards the same goal, so work together!  
- Elizabeth LeFors

3. Prioritize. When I'm training new techs especially those who will work on 2nd shift when our lab receives more than 50% of our work volume I always teach them to watch their stats. We perform a lot of outreach and sometimes it can become very overwhelming. One of the things I used to do to find my center and reduce stress was focus on my stats and know my order just like for poker. A stat spinal fluid comes before a stat wet prep comes before a stat body fluid comes before a stat urine. Everything else we will get to when we can as soon as we can. If someone is calling demanding a urine and I've just received a stat spinal fluid for a cell count from the emergency department I let them know that I've just received a stat spinal fluid for a cell count from the emergency department. Communication and staying calm is key. Know your order and stick to it.  
- Ally Storla

4. Many times we sing and dance when things aren't going right.  
-Gretchen Brocksmith

5. I am a firm believer in the power of baked goods! There is nothing a yummy cookie or bar can't handle!!!  
-Tiffany Montalvo

6. When feeling overwhelmed, keep your cool and remember the goal of getting accurate patient results above all else. The work will get done eventually, but it's our job to make sure it gets done right.  
- Nathan Howell



**Employment, Unemployment, And Back Again  
(continued)**

frustration into an opportunity to learn new things about science and work on my CE credits at the same time. I watched multiple CE videos, explored the ASCP website, and even explored how to get your Master’s in public health. After nearly 6 weeks of searching I finally got the phone call I was waiting for! A staffing agency that I had been in contact with notified me that one of their candidates had pulled out last minute. This position was in the HLA laboratory at City of Hope. This hospital is a world-renowned comprehensive cancer center-- I could not have asked for a better opportunity! I was offered the position and my start date was two weeks out. I felt like a thousand pounds were lifted off my shoulders at that moment, but the anxiety didn’t stop there. Now I had to think about starting at the new lab! The second round of anxious thoughts came racing through my head--What if I make a mistake? What will the other technologists be like? What if I don’t learn the new techniques fast enough? What if I fall behind? As I write this article I have worked at my new lab for 3 days now. The staff is extremely friendly and very welcoming. The bench I am being trained on seems like the perfect workload and the right amount of complexity. I still remember how to pipet and I am confident I will be able to succeed in my new lab.

In the end, all the disappointment and sadness turned into a great situation. My advice for anyone who has to move labs and is stuck in limbo? Hang in there! Turn your frustration into motivation! Work with recruiters and staffing agencies that contact you. Send multiple follow up emails. Do your research for possible positions and most importantly-- stay confident! It can be an unpleasant time, but know that there



**The Break Room**

**The most powerful weapons**



Magic wand



Micropipette



Lightsaber

Sketching Science



**Holiday Scheduling...**  
**(Continued)**

as much as you can and help out with your fair share, as many hands make light work.

I'd like to close this article with a recent post from a Medical Laboratory Scientist, Anne M., who recently worked on Thanksgiving and shared the following words on Facebook's New Medical Laboratory Professionals (ASCP) Group:

"It's days like today I struggle. Why didn't I just go to school for teaching. I'd have my holidays and summers off. I wouldn't have to spend a bunch of holidays and weekends and days that the kids have off from school at work. As I'm getting ready for work I'm thinking why, why, why am I doing this? And as I'm driving to work passing cars loaded with families and smiles, I'm driving into an evening shift at work--on Thanksgiving. I arrive at work and I sit in my car. So upset that I have to go into WORK! I am so consumed and pissed and angry and then I look and I see family members headed to the hospital to see their loved ones. I'm suddenly taken over by guilt and sadness. My kids are healthy. My family is together. Everything is good. Really good. I realize I have a lot to be thankful for. I take the long walk from the parking lot, through the lobby where visitors are talking softly and hugging. Ugh...so grateful I am. Wow. Then I pass by the cafeteria where once again visitors are getting a hospital turkey dinner. And this is where they are spending THEIR holiday. I think - wow, I'm here too but under different circumstances. It makes me thankful again...it really gets me. I walk into the lab and the day shift is anxious to leave. I wish them all a happy thanksgiving. And I begin my shift...thankful for many things. Suddenly the guilt and sadness of being away from my family washes away and the lab tech in me kicks in. I love my job. I wouldn't have it any other way. Happy Thanksgiving to all those working tonight! There is always something to be thankful for!"

Working in healthcare goes hand in hand with often being required to work on the holidays but perspective is important. Our many patients rely on us 365 days a year including holidays. While the sacrifice is very real we should also be proud that we are able to be there for our patients.



## Rising Above Our Harshest Critics – Ourselves!

By: Karen Larson, MLS(ASCP)<sup>CM</sup>, NPNMF Chair  
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Have you ever felt yourself becoming caught in this thought cycle? "I can't do that. I don't even know how." "What if I'm not good enough? It would be safer to not try." "I've never done that before. How would others judge me?" I admit-- I find myself drowning in this downward spiral at times. When I first started my job as a clinic laboratory supervisor seven months ago, I often found myself in a state of fear, anxiety, and nervousness when it came to making crucial decisions. I had only worked in the field for two and a half years-- Could I really do this?

At twenty-six years old, would my employees, the providers, and other professionals follow if I led? I was so worried about getting things perfect that I fell behind and spent way too many hours at work. I spent a lot of time agonizing over things that could have been handled quickly if I hadn't doubted myself so much.

How self-deprecating! We paralyze ourselves when we rush to conclusions and don't treat ourselves kindly. Not only are we holding ourselves back with these judgements, we are depriving others of the unique talents we have yet to discover in ourselves when we choose to walk out on a limb and take on new challenges. It's scary... and risky!

"What if I fail?" As a group of professionals, I think we especially handle the risk of failing poorly. There's no room for error in the work we do - people's lives depend on us producing the correct answer. No wonder we struggle with fear of failure!

How do we overcome that fear in order to ultimately bring forth our very best-selves? Here are a few things that have worked well for me. What works for you? E-mail me your ideas and we'll include them in our next newsletter! [klarso42@fairview.org](mailto:klarso42@fairview.org)

Ideas to break the fear of failure cycle:

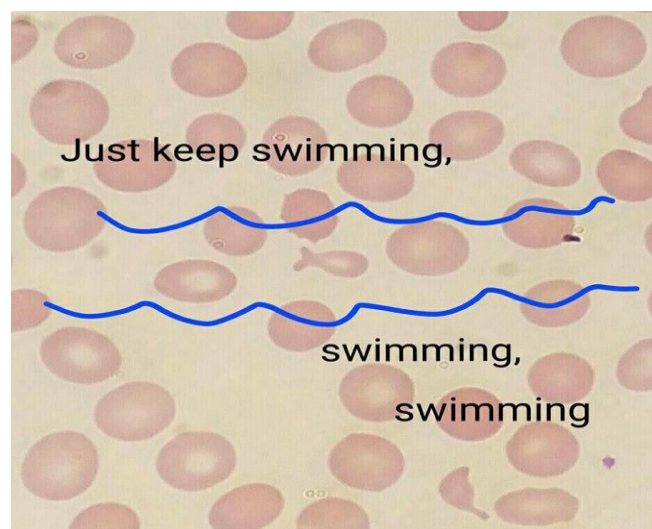
1. Remind yourself that completed is better than perfect. I've had times that I think of exactly how I want something to be. Instead of just doing it, I spend so much time in the planning
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## Rising Above... (Continued)

phase that by the time I'm ready it is no longer timely. Plus, how good do you feel when you can relax because it is done?

2. Ask someone you trust for feedback. Tell them what you're thinking through and the way it has you feeling. When you have someone act as your soundboard it allows you to see it from a different perspective. Chances are they think you are doing a great job. We are so often our worst critics and it helps us see clearly through someone else's eyes.
3. If you like the awesome feeling of accomplishment that comes with crossing something off your list, jot down your difficult to-do items. Give yourself a reasonable time limit to complete the task and set a timer for X number of minutes less than what your goal is. When your timer goes off, ask yourself honestly-- where are you at with the project, compared to where you thought you could be? This helps me recognize if I am getting into a self-defeating agonizing cycle and then I can get myself out of it.
4. Believe in yourself! Failure is a part of success. Someone told me when I first started my new job that successful leaders work hard to fail forward fast. It's all about trying something new, learning from what didn't work, and continually trying to improve. How are you judging success?
5. Find a phrase that reminds you to be kind to yourself and break free from your own judgements. I like to sing Dory's "Just keep swimming" song from the movie, Finding Nemo. It cheers me up, makes my thoughts a little lighter, and reminds me that persistence wins in the end!

I hope that by sharing my experience with this common struggle it will help you find the courage to talk with others in your life about the unwanted self-defeating thoughts that have been holding you back. If we support each other and ourselves, the sky is the limit!



## ASCLS NPNMF 2016-2017 Leadership Roster

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## CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS!

ASCLS is seeking volunteers for various positions within the organization and we want YOU to apply!

Applications for current volunteer opportunities are due Monday, February 6<sup>th</sup>.

Your profile will be used throughout the year to fill other opportunities as they arise.

**For more information or to apply, visit [connect.ascls.org](http://connect.ascls.org)**

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## Purpose and Charges of the ASCLS NPNMF 2016-2017

The **purpose** of the ASCLS NPNMF is to engage and inform individuals new to the profession and ASCLS about the various opportunities that membership affords. Forum driven activities will support the needs and interests of Forum members.

**Charge 1:** Establish a key network of those members interested in participating in efforts of the NPNMF and communicate with them on a monthly basis.

**Charge 2:** Educate members of the NPNMF on ASCLS and opportunities within ASCLS so all involved gain a better understanding of the inner workings of ASCLS.

**Charge 3:** Identify the needs of those new to the profession and/or ASCLS to determine how ASCLS can help meet those needs as an organization.

### What's the buzz?

This year, the ASCLS NPNMF has started some fun, helpful, and informative columns on our Facebook page! Check out the summaries for more information on these new columns below!

1. **Maintenance Monday:** Continuing education related posts so you can stay up to date on your CE Credits!
2. **Fast Track Friday:** Posts on the importance of professionalism in this field. The side effect from the shortage in our field is a lot of younger individuals are moving up the ladder very quickly in their hospitals.
3. **Spotlight Saturday:** Interesting books/multimedia related posts as well as showcasing individuals in ASCLS. This column will be posted as often as we have content.

Join and check out our NPNMF Facebook page for these posts and more! Go to <https://www.facebook.com/groups/NPNMF/>

If you have an announcement, article or essay you would like to contribute to *The Culture*, please feel free to submit it for publication!

Please send ideas and submissions with the subject line, "NPNMF E-Newsletter Submission" to Vathani Logendran at [vathani.logendran@gmail.com](mailto:vathani.logendran@gmail.com)

Visit the website at <http://www.ascls.org/new-professional-new-member-forum>

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