

Guest Editorial

The Only Constant in Perfusion Education is That It Will Change

In the early 70s, the leadership of Perfusion Education, American Society of Extra-Corporeal Technology (AmSECT), and the American Board of Cardiovascular Perfusion (ABCP) recognized the need to move from OJT Training of perfusionists to schools of Perfusion in order to offer a formal education that would meet the growing need for perfusionists in the United States. With that recognition came change, and change has been a part of perfusion education ever since.

Perfusion schools were first granted accreditation by the ABCP. However, the profession, rightfully so, demanded that accreditation must move away from the Board because there was a conflict of interest in the same body granting accreditation to the schools and granting certification to that school's graduates.

The ABCP gave up accreditation and changed the way all schools would be granted accreditation. Schools moved to the American Medical Association (AMA) system of accreditation and a Joint Review Committee made up of sponsoring organizations from the profession. With this change schools were now being evaluated using STANDARDS for Perfusion Education that were adopted by the Joint Review Committee and approved by the AMA.

In the early 1990s, the Joint Review Committee moved out of the AMA offices and was incorporated. The Committee also had a name change. It went from the Joint Committee for Perfusion Education to the Accreditation Committee for Perfusion Education, a joint review committee. Nothing was ever said as to why the name change was needed, but I believe those who suggested the change knew that the AMA was about to move away from accreditation.

In 1994 that change came about, the AMA announced that they would no longer be granting accreditation. With that announcement another accreditation organization was formed, The Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs, (CAAHEP). There was one major change with moving to this new organization—



money. Now both the schools and sponsors needed to pay a fee to belong to CAAHEP.

The next change came just a few years ago; the Committee moved from a process-based accreditation system to an outcomes-based system. This was a major change for both the schools and the Committee. It meant that the schools would be evaluated under new outcomes STANDARDS.

There are more changes to come. The Committee is working on a new curriculum that will add to the knowledge base of perfusion graduates and expand the scope of practice. The Committee and the schools continue to be concerned about the cost of the process as well as the number of schools leaving the system. The Committee continues to debate the issue of leaving the CAAHEP system and become an independent accreditor.

Although change will remain the hallmark of perfusion education, we cannot ever forget those leaders who saw the need for a better educated professional and met that need. Over the past 30 plus years of formal perfusion education most of their names have been forgotten, but their legacy remains as strong as ever. Their vision and willingness to change has made perfusionists' education the gold standard it is today.

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