

Formal Statement of Concern on the Education and Hiring of Non-CST Surgical Technologists

April 10, 2023



It has become imperative and essential that the GASA Board of Directors speak out concerning the attempts of many parties to start abbreviated training programs for surgical technologists and hospitals hiring non-CST credentialed personnel. The rigors of our field cannot and should not be rushed. The fact that we have so many different parties wanting to diminish what we do and rush the process is disturbing. It is understood that there are shortages in our professional field; however, we must not lose sight of the worth of a well-trained and professional surgical technologist to the surgical team to ensure good outcomes for our patients.

Many of our board members have worked very hard and diligently to train and mold some of the best and brightest surgical technologists in this field with a combined experience of over 70 years. We know what needs to go into the training of these professionals. These facts make us highly qualified to make this statement in no uncertain terms: ***You cannot properly train a qualified, professional surgical technologist in an 8-week to 6-month program.***

It is for this reason that the accredited programs across this country have been mandated to offer a minimum Associate Degree program. Indeed, in the United States we have 17 states that will only allow CSTs (Certified Surgical Technologists) to operate on the surgical team in their hospitals. They have seen the value in the true credential.

The Certified Surgical Technologist (CST) credential is the gold standard in our profession and should be the **ONLY** credential recognized across the country in the practice of surgical technology. This credential can only be achieved by both graduating from a program accredited through ARC/STSA or ABHES, and sitting for the Certified Surgical Technologist (CST) exam from NBSTSA (National Board of Surgical Technology & Surgical Assisting).

The substandard programs that are preying on unsuspecting students are **NOT** accredited by either of these agencies, are most often not regionally accredited schools, and very often are charging tens of thousands of dollars to receive an inadequate education. The great majority of these programs **DO NOT INCLUDE CLINICAL EXPERIENCE** for the students.

Therein lies the issue with credentials other than the CST - students or graduates are allowed to take and hold a "credential" without ever having set foot into an operating room. Hospitals then see these alternate credentials and assume that all credentials are the same. What the hospital gets for their first TWO YEARS of employment, and more importantly what the surgical patient gets, is an unqualified, untrained employee. The hospitals pay these unqualified people to get their training on the job! Would their surgical patients be pleased to know that?

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The acceptance of any other credential by hospitals is putting the surgical patient at risk. We have to ask ourselves – is it worth it? If you or a loved one were a patient, wouldn't you want the very best in highly trained personnel surrounding you in your most vulnerable of situations? Of course, you would! Therefore, we must NOT allow untrained or poorly trained personnel in the operating room to pass sharp objects over breathing people!

Human Resources personnel and OR supervisors must be educated on the proper credential and training, and effective vetting of surgical technologists must be done before hiring. The attached comparison chart will help you discover the differences between credentials and training programs.

Imagine a world where we could hire nurses with an alternate credential to RN. We would only hire the alternates, and no RNs would be hired because they are too expensive. We would be cared for only by those with the substandard credential from an 8-week or 13- week training course! This is the exact scenario we are seeing with surgical technology in the state of Georgia currently. Please help us in preserving the integrity of our profession, and do not diminish our worth by allowing anyone other than those with the CST credential to serve surgical patients.

Respectfully,

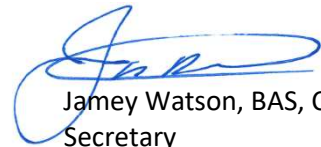
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