



Jay with his mentor, Chris Coffin.

Jay Thomas, Current Protégé

I've been a medical technologist for 12 years now. During the first nine and one half years of my career I worked on the bench as a generalist. One day it dawned on me that there might be more out there. I wanted a non-traditional challenging position to invigorate me and make me feel like the first time I issued my first cross-matched unit.

I found that challenge at Our Lady of The Lake Regional Medical Center in the Blood Donor Center. I am now the Supervisor of Blood Donor Services. Being in a new environment my director (David Gremillion) suggested that I might benefit from joining SCABB. Not happy to just sit idly by, I decided to take it one step further and join the Protégé/Mentor program. There seems to be no better way to become

involved and get to know the most outstanding professionals in the blood banking industry.

Since becoming a protégé I've had the opportunity to attend this year's joint SCABB/CBBS meeting in Las Vegas and participate in many of the seminars and workshops there. I've also had the privilege of receiving guidance from industry leaders and having conversations with peers about current topics ranging from TRALI risk reduction to ISBT 128.

In July, the SCABB Summer Board meeting was hosted by Our Lady of The Lake RMC. In David's absence, I was given charge to host the meeting and make sure all of the needs of the Board's members were met. I found myself contacting CEOs, toting tables, consulting Our Lady of the Lake's information services department, gathering lunch, and a host of other tasks but everything seemed to turn out great. I have one regret however; I wore a suit on a very hot, humid Louisiana day only to discover that most of the board members came to the meeting in casual attire and even some in jeans. Who knew?

My future projects will include a Pulse article, and a commitment to work with the Information Technology committee. I look forward to working with my mentor, Chris Coffin, for the rest of the year and taking in all that I can.

So far my Protégé experiences have been very exciting. I encourage anyone wanting to take full advantage of being a member of SCABB to consider participating in this very rewarding program.

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Radio Frequency Identification for the Blood Bank... IS IT READY?

There is legitimate need for a technology in healthcare which does not require a physical scan, and which can ensure without human intervention data is being captured and moved about people or items. HIMSS has a special interest group for healthcare looking at the use of RFID.

For blood banking and transfusion medicine, the RFID adoption cycle is also beginning to inch forward. It is generally believed by technology and standards groups that the blood industry is uniquely positioned to successfully use RFID due to its long history of common labeling and data standards, as well as standardized processes and controls. Independent studies show decreases in bedside transfusion error by using RFID enabled processes, and BloodCenter of Wisconsin's study is also showing supply chain efficiency and effectiveness gains in blood collection and manufacturing which would offset the cost of the technology investment. The International Standards for Blood Transfusion (ISBT) has a working party for RFID and is tasked to develop standards for its use internationally in blood banking and transfusion medicine. Their goal is to

ensure that the blood industry arrives at a chip design, frequency, and set of data standards which ensure that RFID can be used as seamlessly as we use barcodes between all of our organization's today. It is important to note that the ISBT 128 product labeling standard was envisioned even 10 years ago to not be only reliant on a barcode, but to ensure data standards which could be used with other technologies such as RFID. But, the ISBT working party, and those working on the various studies are also sensitive that the transfusion service in the hospital setting cannot be so different from other hospital uses of RFID (infant tracking, supplies, or pharmaceutical), that a hospital would refuse to support the infrastructure needed by the transfusion service. Therefore, they are working with representatives from EPCGlobal and conferring with HIMSS on where they are headed.

The FDA – particularly per the push on pharma – is also watching with great interest the studies being done within blood. BloodCenter of Wisconsin, as part of its supply chain study on RFID, is doing some of the first formal clinical trials of the impact of RFID tags and frequency exposure on blood. The acceptance of these trials by the FDA will pave the way for BloodCenter of Wisconsin with its partners to have a prototype application

available (using ISBT RFID working party standards) in testing with blood products by late early 2008.

However, it should be noted that any use of RFID will not and should not replace the core decision making logic of existing blood bank and transfusion systems. RFID and its surrounding applications will be tasked with providing additional data, and easier movement and gathering of information and product tracking. Think of RFID in blood banking as augmenting existing back end systems and working with current labeling and bar-coding standards.

In summary, it is safe to say we do see RFID in healthcare and blood banking moving along the adoption curve. RFID usage is certainly not to the stage of general adoption, but it has moved beyond the "bleeding edge"/early adoption phase. Its general adoption and use will continue to be influenced by practical usefulness/need and ROI. The studies in blood are showing this exists, but the completion of the noted standards, clinical trials and then excellent application development to augment existing blood bank and transfusion management systems must occur to reach general adoption.

Donor/Recruitment /Collections Committee Plans Big for the Next Annual Meeting!

The upcoming South Central Association of Blood Banks 50th Annual Meeting is sure to bring excitement and lots of fun to all involved. The DRC committee is meeting regularly to plan and put together educational sessions that are sure to get your attention. The Marriott Westchase will host this grand convention, April 3-6, 2008 in Houston, TX.

The DRC committee will make sure you remember the past with a session entitled, "The History of Blood Banking" brought to you by a long time veteran of the blood banking profession. This session will take you through a historical journey of what blood banks once were to the new challenges we face today.

Hear from two leading companies in the blood banking industry on, "How to Collect Blood during Problem Times?" This session will identify new ways of collecting blood during the most crucial times.

"Do you want to market outside of your current demographics for donors?" Visit our session on Hispanic Marketing where you will learn how to increase the education among this minority population to donate blood and become blood donors.

TRALI has definitely become an issue for blood centers. During the, "Floor Challenges" session hear what is being done to overcome the adverse affects TRALI has on blood centers. Learn how blood centers are continuing to prepare themselves by taking apheresis equipment on mobiles.

If you are in the donor recruitment or collections department of the blood banking world, a major concern is to assure that the donor returns. Good customer service skills are a must for all employees involved. Learn how to put the "WOWS" customer service standards to work for you and you are sure to win over with service every time.

This is only a fraction of what the DRC committee has to offer during the 50th annual meeting. Hope to see you there!