

Certification: A big deal?
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Objectives:

- Discuss how a sterile processing technician can become certified.
- Discuss different states that have or are working on legislation to mandate certification in their facilities.
- Discuss the benefits of certification.
- Discuss why some personnel may be skeptical about achieving certification.
- Discuss the role anxiety may play in test-taking.

Why certify??

“I’ve been doing this job for 30 years and you can’t make me become certified”! If you are snickering as you read this it may imply that you have either overheard one of your fellow coworkers initiate this statement. Maybe you have allowed the words to blurt out of your own mouth a time or two. For those seasoned employees it may be difficult to rationalize the importance of becoming certified in the very critical field of sterile processing. Many have performed as OJT sterile processing technicians and have performed very well. These technicians may not see even the slightest reason why they should sit down for an exam that not only reconfirms that they know what they are doing, but recognizes that they are supreme technicians once they receive those extra credentials. So, why become certified?

What makes the sterile processing role so important?

Before we get into why certification is so important, let’s discuss in detail what it means to operate as a sterile processing technician. Sterile processing technician’s duties are: “To ensure the safety and cleanliness of reusable equipment, Central Services technicians decontaminate, sterilize and package instruments according to manufacturer and Food and Drug Administration specifications” (Montero, 2008). The sterile processing technician is a highly, skilled individual that works cohesively with infection control, operating room, emergency departments, dental clinics, and other departments in which the common goal is to achieve the highest quality of patient safety.

Sterile processing technicians are the true “hearts of the hospital”. Departments throughout hospitals and clinics cannot run efficiently without the sterile processing team, and the sterile processing team cannot function without those departments. Therefore, why wouldn’t it be crucial for someone in a role so important to achieve the additional education necessary to sit



for an exam(s) that are recognized on a national level?

Could anxiety play a role?

“I’m terrible at testing”! There is at least one person you may know that feels this way about testing. It may even be you that unconsciously becomes decomposed at the thought of having to take an exam. If so, don’t worry, you are not alone. There are

several adults across the country that suffers from “test anxiety”. “Anxiety disorders are the **most common mental illness in the U.S.**, affecting 40 million adults in the United States age 18 and older (18% of U.S. population)” (Anxiety and Depression Association of America, 2014). Although anxiety is common in several adults, it is a treatable condition. There is a specific anxiety that targets adults by the name of Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD). “Generalized anxiety disorder is characterized by persistent, excessive, and unrealistic worry about everyday things” (Anxiety and Depression Association of America, 2014). Although, GAD may not be the primary reason personnel within the sterile processing department do not want to become certified, it could be a slight concern for some employees. Once seasoned staff can become comfortable about the idea of testing by being educated on the numerous benefits of becoming certified, there could potentially be an increase of personnel that wants to get certified, versus those that are forced to become certified.

How do I become certified?

There are two national certification agencies in which a sterile processing technician can become certified in the field of sterile processing. [The Certification Board for Sterile Processing and Distribution, Inc. (CBSPD), formerly the NICHSPDP, is a non-profit Certification Board which plans, develops and administers competency-based "**International**" certification examinations for personnel performing cleaning, disinfection, sterilization and inventory management activities, regardless of the setting] (The Certification Board for Sterile Processing and Distribution, 2014). IAHCSSM also known as the International Association of Healthcare Central Service Material Management is one of the other certification organizations in which a sterile processing technician could achieve a nationally recognized certification. Their mission statement is as follows: “The mission of IAHCSSM is to promote patient safety worldwide by raising the level of expertise and recognition for those in the Central Service profession” (International Association of Healthcare Central Service Material Management, 2014). Depending on which agency the sterile processing technician chooses to become certified through would indicate the minimal qualifications in which they would be allowed to test.

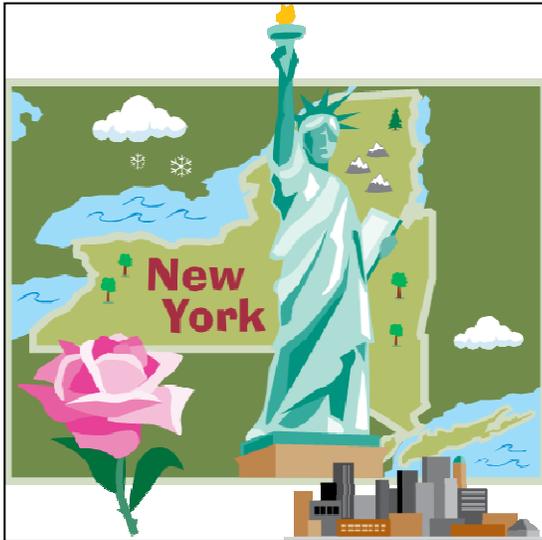


Some qualifications may include, but are not limited to: graduating from an accredited school that offers a sterile processing certification or degree and/or on the job training that is verified by a supervisor. Besides coming certified in just the area of a technician, there are also other certifications awarded for technicians that include but, are not limited to the areas of: management, surgical instrumentation, and gastrointestinal/endoscope reprocessing. In order to see what certification is applicable to the personnel looking into becoming certified, the applicant could visit either the CBSPD website @ http://www.sterileprocessing.org/about_cbspd.htm or the IAHCSSM website @ <https://www.iahcssm.org/about.html> to see which certification would be within their best interest. Both certification agencies offer national recognition to technicians that have taken the additional step to become certified in sterile processing.

What states require certification?

Currently, there are two U.S. states that have signed into legislation to mandate certification. Those two states are New York and New Jersey. Starting in January, it will be a requirement for all central sterile processing employees working in the state of New York to become certified through a national certification agency. “The state of New Jersey currently requires certification of CS technicians, while the state of New York will require new CS techs to be certified starting January 1, 2015, allowing them 18 months from

the date of hire to achieve certification” (Healthcare Purchasing News, 2014). Due to these new regulations in the states of New York and New Jersey, there have been several conversations across the Northeast for other states to jump on the bandwagon to mandate certification for their CS personnel.



Currently, there are hospitals throughout the U.S. whom have made it a requirement within their hospitals or clinics for their employees to become certified although; their residing state(s) has not signed this policy into legislation.



Benefits of certification

As previously discussed, sterile processing technicians are truly the “heart” of all hospitals and clinics across the country. When you discuss the heart, you are discussing a very valuable structure that is necessary to maintain the life of something. This is the way all sterile processing technicians should see themselves (as valued employees). Certification adds to that value. Some facilities give actual pay raise incentives for those personnel that take the extra step into becoming certified. Certification also means continuous education. In a world that is ever-so evolving, the field of sterile processing is constantly evolving as well, which makes it necessary for seasoned and un-seasoned employees to learn continuously. Either way you look at it, there are more pros than cons when it comes to deciding if you want to certify or not. Whenever the average person looks at those extra credentialing criteria before an employee’s job title, it often speaks volumes regardless if that employee is a doctor, nurse, or technician. It shows that *“I am willing to continue to learn to stay abroad of all the latest that I need to know to do my job either to meet or exceeding the expectations”*. Certification puts a stamp on the sterile processing technician that shouts out: *“I am not mediocre, I am exceptional; I am*

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Post-Test 2014

- 1. "OJT" technicians have performed poorly over the years.
TRUE FALSE
- 2. Test anxiety can play a role in adults not wanting to take an exam.
TRUE FALSE
- 3. Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the U.S., affecting 20 million adults in the United States age 18 and older (18% of U.S. population)"
TRUE FALSE
- 4. Generalized anxiety disorder is characterized by persistent, excessive, and realistic worry about everyday things
TRUE FALSE
- 5. There is only one nationally recognized certification board within the U.S. for sterile processing technicians.
TRUE FALSE
- 6. Graduating from an accredited school that offers a sterile processing certification is one requirement that may allow someone to sit for a national certification exam as a sterile processing technician.
TRUE FALSE
- 7. New Jersey is the only state that has signed into legislation mandatory certification for sterile processing technicians.
TRUE FALSE
- 8. Sterile processing technicians are invaluable employees.
TRUE FALSE
- 9. Becoming certified can add additional value to the sterile processing technician.
TRUE FALSE
- 10. There is no need for continuous education once a sterile processing technician becomes certified.
TRUE FALSE

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Lana Haecherl

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Your certificate will be sent via email if your score is greater than 70%

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