

BULLETIN

Histotechnologist's work honoured in award

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Okay, heres a test. How fast can you say histotechnologist? Forthat matter, do you know what it is?

Its a health sciences profession, of course, and it involves thetesting of human tissue for signs of disease. Its also a word that has an aura of accomplishment and pride about it for lab worker and HSA member Janet Tunncliffe.

Tunncliffe, section head of the histopathology lab at Surrey Memorialhospital, is last years winner of the Histotechnologist of the Year Award. Not onlythat, but shes the first Canadian to win the award granted yearly by the US basedNational Society of Histotechnology.

The Society, which offers voluntary membership in the US, is dividedinto regions. Canada is the ninth.

The award came as a complete surprise, says Tunncliffe. She wasattending the societys annual convention in Columbus, Ohio. On the final night, hername was announced.

Why did she win? Tunncliffe isnt completely sure, but notes shewas nominated by four Canadians, including the pathologist with whom she works.-Ive been very actively involved with the society for years."

So what does a histotechnologist do? Most of the technologiststime involves assisting the lab pathologist in -grossing" ... taking a pieceof tissue and rendering it into microscope slides for the pathologist to diagnose.-Ninety per cent of the work is looking for signs of benign or malignantactivity," says Tunncliffe.

Other work relates to autopsies, vasectomies, forensic services to thecoroner and clinical studies. -We do all the tissue work for the Fraser Valley CancerCentre," Tunncliffe relates.

Tunncliffe graduated as a general medical lab technologist in 1975 andin histopathology the following year. She explains: -I like histopathology, I supposebecause you do so many different things on the job. You get to meet with the pathologistand discuss the work, rather than just standing in front of a machine all day, pressingbuttons."

She was second in charge at the Vancouver Hospital lab early in hercareer, and worked in New Zealand and at

Royal Columbian hospital after that. Ten years ago, after a stint in sales, Tunncliffe started at Surrey Memorial.

A unique feature of Tunncliffe's workplace ... and an indicator of why she won the histotechnologist award ... is that she designed it. She did the same for the newer, expanded lab. (While at the convention, Tunncliffe gave a workshop on laboratory information systems.)

Additionally, she gives lectures across the country and volunteers time to share skills and experience. "I'm really pro-educational," says Tunncliffe. "If you know something, you have an obligation to share your knowledge." Lately she's been giving lectures on the use of computers in lab work.

That attitude applies to relations among lab technologists. "I don't believe in re-inventing the wheel. If someone wants some information on how we run things, I'm happy to fax it to them. And I have no qualms about picking up the phone and asking others."

Over the last few years, Tunncliffe has been offered jobs by several firms. "I've turned them down," she relates. "I've no desire to leave Surrey Memorial."

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