FROM THE EDITORS

National Medical Laboratory Week, April 11–17, 1999

It is very fitting and appropriate that as we reach toward the millennium, we should choose as a theme for National Medical Laboratory Week—Laboratory Professionals: Your Link Between Technology and Good Health. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 359,000 persons are employed as clinical laboratory technologists and technicians. This week is set aside to celebrate the dedication of all medical laboratory professionals and the critical role they play in patient care.

Technology, in all its forms, from computers to laboratory instrumentation has had a positive impact on the quality of laboratory testing. However, it has also masked the critical role that laboratory professionals continue to play in supporting modern health care. National Medical Laboratory Week gives us an opportunity to promote our profession, make it more visible, and also to thank these dedicated professionals for their vital role in enhancing the quality of health care throughout the world.

*Laboratory Medicine* celebrates National Medical Laboratory Week every day. Our efforts are always directed at both the education of laboratory professionals and the promotion of our profession. As we approach the millennium, this commitment is as strong as ever. As editor, I thank all the dedicated members of our profession and join everyone in celebrating National Medical Laboratory Week.

Reference


I last had the opportunity to put my thoughts in writing to you in the August 1998 editorial when I explained that other members of the *Laboratory Medicine* Editorial Advisory Board would be writing editorials. You have had the opportunity since then to get their perspectives on issues of importance to our profession. Considering the letters we have received, it seems that readers have enjoyed this connection with other members of the Editorial Advisory Board.

I am pleased to be back in this issue, specifically to recognize National Medical Laboratory Week, and most importantly, you the readers! The theme “Laboratory Professionals: Your Link Between Technology and Good Health” seems especially appropriate in 1999 when so much diagnostic work now focuses on an outpatient, wellness approach. While the environment of health care and the reimbursement policies seem to change almost daily, your work and the part it plays in human health remain constant in its importance. I know it is difficult to remember the value of your role when you are trying to figure out if a physician's order for a glucose is accompanied by a reimbursable diagnostic code. Or when you are worrying about being assigned the team leader role in your laboratory, which really means you have to do the schedule, order supplies, and still cover the chemistry bench. And, as wonderful as automation is for the laboratory, you wonder about black boxes that almost anyone can run, as hospital administration looks for ways to cut costs.

We are, and I believe we will remain, the vital link between the physician and the patient, the technology and the result, and the problem and its solution. Our physicians are also trying to keep current with the changes and will need the advice of and consultations with laboratory professionals more than ever. Technology designed to be run by almost anyone requires laboratory oversight of training, quality control, competency, and deviations. Lastly, it takes your training and expertise in the laboratory to recognize a problem, whether it is a questionable result or a frightened pediatric patient, and take the appropriate actions.

As you participate in and enjoy your own laboratory’s festivities for National Medical Laboratory Week, I add my own thanks for a job well done. On behalf of the entire Editorial Advisory Board, we wish each of you a fun and informative Lab Week.