

The future of clinical chemistry and its role in healthcare: a report of the Athena Society

Given the omnipresent cost-containment environment in which clinical chemists now work, they must adapt to a host of changed conditions and new pressures. Much of the onus of adapting is on the individual who must assume a different attitude to his or her work. The American Association for Clinical Chemistry can, and should, take a leadership role in developing a new type of laboratory director by working with other professional organizations in the clinical laboratory field to create training programs and retraining programs for existing clinical laboratory scientists, which will equip them for broader scientific and managerial responsibilities than hitherto. AACC needs to develop alliances with its sister organizations so that the common issues are addressed collectively rather than competitively. The scope of clinical chemistry must expand into areas other than traditional clinical chemistry, e.g., microbiology, immunology, certain aspects of hematology (including coagulation), and even aspects of blood banking. The former clinical chemist needs to become a clinical laboratory scientist and promote him- or herself as having cross-disciplinary expertise in analytical techniques and automation, which are the common threads linking all branches of clinical laboratory science.