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there are differences in drive, spark and critical thinking.

There are MTs and MLTs who want to do no more than the minimum job description and leave the procedures, validation, employee evaluations, quality assurance, instrument troubleshooting and vendor negotiations to someone else. This profession requires a broad range of skills learned at the bench, in the classroom and on job.

If we truly want this to be a two-tiered system, then we must establish national license requirements for both levels and design appropriate, articulated programs.

—*Ruth Hugeback, MLT(ASCP), CLS(NCA), MT(AMT), HEW(CLT),*
Via e-mail

To the Editor:

I strongly disagree with Kirby Jessen's letter disputing Ray Siver's letter. Some of the things he said were highly offensive to MLTs. How can he say the MLT is "missing drive, motivation, spark?" Who is he to judge?

It took quite a bit of drive and motivation to drive an hour and a half to MLT school every day for 2 years, and I would have to say it took "spark" to love it enough to do so, and get a 4.0! As far as the statement he made "the MLT doesn't know what he doesn't know," I would say he doesn't know what the MLT knows! Especially because his state has no MLTs, how would he know anything about them since he has never worked with them? He said quality will go down now that the number of MLTs is rising? I can't even believe he could say something so rude, with no experience working with MLTs to back it up! Some of the best techs in our lab are MLTs!

As far as why doesn't the MLT "go the extra mile"—who is he to judge? There could be many reasons: money, time, kids, happy where they are, etc. Maybe it could just be we have so many MTs looking down their noses at us that our morale is low and we lose the motivation, drive and spark to

"go that extra mile!"

Please, we're all techs, we're all in it for the patients! Let's work as a team and quit putting each other down!

—*Shauna McKinney, MLT(ASCP),*
Lake Jackson, TX

To the Editor:

It discourages me as a recent MLT graduate that some MTs have such negative views of MLTs. Sure, there are plenty of MLTs who are not very good at what they do. But I'm

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sure the same can be said of MTs. I acknowledge there is a difference between MLTs and MTs besides more education and a few thousand dollars, I just don't see why some MTs feel it is necessary to disrespect MLTs based on their educational background.

In the letter by Kirby Jessen, he said, "Performance is not the issue. Thinking is." MLT training does not just involve instrument training, as he likens it to, but rather 2 years of didactic training and 6 months of clinical training. This increases the knowledge base, and the clinical training helps to foster critical thinking skills. Without critical thinking skills, the MLT is just a button pusher.

Also, to group all MLTs together as "missing that motivation, drive, spark" is a tautological fallacy. Just because some MLTs do not become MTs doesn't mean all MLTs decide not to become MTs. I would say a good number of MLTs do "take the curriculum and appropriate tests to become an MT."

The reason why an MLT wouldn't might be because they like what they do. MLTs generally work in all areas of the lab and possess the knowledge to work in all areas of the lab, where an MT is usually focused more into one core area, and may have several branches into another, but their area of expertise and work is limited to one area.

I agree "all people deserve respect," but just as "respect does not make an MLT an MT," neither does respect make an MT better than an MLT. I have had some MT coworkers tell me that I can't do something, just because I'm an MLT, only to find out that I can do it better than them, or that a policy was in place preventing me from doing it, but no real data suggested I was unable to perform this.

One example in my lab is microbiology. Only MTs are hired in the micro department, and only MTs are allowed to read Gram stains. Why? Policy. There is no CAP requirement stating an MLT can't, but that's the way it's been for 30-plus years. Guess what: I'm the first MLT to be officially "trained" to read Gram stains. I thought my trainer was going to die of shock when she got the same results I did reading Grams.

I guess Mr. Jessen is disillusioned by being in California, as he admitted "we don't have MLTs—yet." Well, just wait. You will be surprised at how good the MLTs are that you hire. And if your "quality of lab testing as (you) know it today" decreases in the years ahead without MTs, maybe it's not the MLTs' fault.

MLTs can be just as good, sometimes better, than MTs. I also think some MTs believe just because they went to school for 4 years they are automatically better. One example where this was not the case is here at my lab. There was a new employee trainee (MT) who just "didn't get it." He couldn't take all of his book learning and translate it with critical thinking to adjust to the ever-changing patient population. He ended up leaving in a storm one day because he had it. He didn't understand why all of his schooling didn't train him for this. I guess maybe he wasn't predisposed to critical thinking because critical thinking is not something you can learn in a classroom.

—*David Helfinstine, MLT(ASCP),*
Minneapolis

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