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AS NATION CELEBRATES NATIONAL MEDICAL LABORATORY WEEK APRIL 8-14, UD PROFESSOR CONCERNED ABOUT NATIONAL SHORTAGE OF MEDICAL TECHNOLOGISTS

The medical profession will celebrate National Medical Laboratory Week April 8-14 at a time when the shortage of certified medical laboratory professionals is reaching crisis proportions.

Studies reported in The Journal of the American Medical Association indicate that tests run by certified medical technologists fell within a reasonable margin of error of 5 percent, but tests run by non-certified personnel had results that varied by as much as 30 percent. Such a margin applied to a cholesterol test could show a person with a healthy level of 200 as being an extremely healthy 140 or an unsafe 260.

Suzanne Columbus, the director of the University of Dayton's medical technology program, which opens its new teaching laboratory on April 10, notes that while the number of jobs in the medical technology area is increasing, the number of students entering the field is decreasing.

"There is a shortage of certified laboratory personnel that may reach crisis level in the 1990s," Columbus said, noting that more than half of the states are already reporting a shortage. An aging population, greater emphasis on correct diagnosis to assure proper treatment, and greater public awareness of wellness and preventative medicine all combine to create a need for medical technologists, she said.

An open house of UD's new medical technology lab will be held on Tuesday, April 10, from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. in Sherman Hall Room 308. Accreditation for the program has been shifted from local hospitals to UD for the first time this year, though students will still perform some lab work at area hospitals.

Columbus blames the shortage of students entering medical technology on the assumption that it is a relatively low-paying field dominated by women. Salaries, she notes, are increasing with starting salaries in the Dayton area now at about $25,000. Areas of rapid growth are industrial research, development and administration. Columbus notes that "two of the three hospitals that are affiliates of the UD program have vice presidents who started as medical technologists."

For media interviews, contact Suzanne Columbus at (513) 229-3584.