



# TECH IN FOCUS

Liz Vogel, CPhT-Adv, CSPT | Advocate Health

**Name: Liz Vogel**

**Practice: Advocate Health-Aurora Cancer Care**

**Title/Role: Oncology Pharmacy Technician Supervisor**

**1) Can you tell us a bit about yourself and your journey as a pharmacy technician?:**

I began my pharmacy technician journey in 2014. Initially, I attended school to become a radiology tech, but soon realized it wasn't my calling. Unsure of my next steps, I consulted with a counselor at my local technical college. She presented various medical field options, from nursing to medical assistant, and introduced me to the pharmacy technician program—a career path I had never considered.

Intrigued, I enrolled in the program, earned my CPhT, and graduated at the top of my class. I was hired at my hospital clinical site, Aurora Medical Center Manitowoc County, where I started my career. I later moved to Aurora BayCare Medical Center, where I was trained in chemotherapy preparation and discovered my passion for sterile compounding. I earned my Compounded Sterile Preparation Technician Certification, becoming the hospital's "IV expert" and also covered shifts in the oncology infusion center.

As I gained experience, I got involved in system projects and site implementations, realizing I wanted to advance further. In September 2022, I took a leap of faith and accepted my current position as Oncology Pharmacy Technician Supervisor for the oncology infusion clinics in the Milwaukee/Metro area in Wisconsin.

**2) Explain your current role at your practice.**

I oversee 6 of our 10 cancer infusion clinic sites and their technicians. My role involves coordinating and training new technicians, managing USP-related tasks including competencies and quality control metrics, and handling daily, weekly, and monthly reporting. I also handle day-to-day leadership operations, such as side-by-side training, site rounding, providing feedback to teammates, addressing facility-related issues, and ensuring regulatory readiness.

### **3) What aspects of being a pharmacy technician do you find most rewarding?**

It was early on that I realized I loved everything sterile compounding related as well as oncology holding a special place in my heart. As I got into my pharmacy technician career more, I find training very rewarding, whether that is new technicians or continuing education/competencies for seasoned technicians. I love learning and supporting my fellow technicians as much as possible so they can provide the safest and best patient care possible.

### **4) How do you stay updated on new medications and advancements in pharmacy practice? Are there any certifications or specialized training you are pursuing or have completed?**

Not only am I involved with NCODA/OPTA, ASHP, and HOPA but have spent 3 years, 1 being the president of the Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin (PSW) Technician Section Board. I've completed my CPhT when I graduated from the pharmacy technician program in 2014 from Lakeshore Technical College and completed my Compounded Sterile Preparation Technician Certification in 2020. Recently, I passed my last of 3 assessment-based exams (Hazardous Drug Handling, Tech Product Verification, and Supply Chain and Inventory Management) to complete my CPhT-Adv Certification through PTCB.

### **5) How do you ensure excellent patient care when patients? Can you share a memorable patient interaction that had a positive impact on their experience?**

Patient care for the techs I oversee looks a bit different since we are not patient-facing and spend most of our day in the cleanroom making infusions. Proper training and retraining are crucial to ensure best practices in aseptic technique, cleaning, and overall cleanroom procedures. This ensures that we provide our patients with high-quality infusions made in the cleanest environment possible.

Inventory management is also critical for excellent patient care, ensuring we have enough medication on hand to avoid treatment delays.

One memorable experience was chatting with a patient in the elevator on his way to see the doctor for treatment. He asked if I would be giving him his Rituxan that day. I told him no, but I might be making it! He looked completely surprised, thinking it just came ready-made. I explained that we have specialized rooms where we prepare his infusion and many others. He thanked me profusely until I got off the elevator. It was a cool experience that sticks with me and reminds me of the impact we have on patients.

### **6. How do you collaborate with pharmacists and other team members of the multidisciplinary team to ensure quality patient care?**

The majority of the clinics I oversee have pharmacists onsite, which fosters a high level of collaboration, whether it's implementing process changes or addressing questions related to sterile compounding. We also work closely with nursing and PSRs to ensure patients are scheduled appropriately for their treatments, ensuring safety for our technicians who are compounding.

**7. How do you handle changes or challenges in pharmacy operations or technology? Are there any innovative practices or improvements you've introduced in your role?**

I feel like I handle changes and challenges well and enjoy being part of them. Healthcare is always changing it is something that we definitely can't avoid, so why not embrace it. When I worked inpatient, I helped with the implementation of Epic Dispense Prep and Camera Checking that we now use to check sterile compounds. Most recently I am working on the conversion of our current quality metrics program to Compounding 360.

**8. What achievements or moments in your career as a pharmacy technician are you most proud of?**

I think my first very proud moment in my pharmacy technician career was completing my CPhT exam before graduating from the LTC program. However, this past year has been FULL of proud moments for me. I've made significant strides in my leadership development, particularly in handling difficult conversations. I was also part of the first all-pharmacy-technician-led presentation at the Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin Educational Conference and completed my CPhT-Adv certification after passing my last assessment-based exam through PTCB.

**9. What advice would you give to someone aspiring to become a pharmacy technician? Are there specific qualities or skills you believe are crucial for success in this role?**

Educate yourself on the many different pathways available to pharmacy technicians. If I hadn't met with that counselor at LTC, I would still think that pharmacy technicians must work in retail and "just count pills." It is so much more than that, and we are so much more than "just technicians!"

Never stop learning. Being open and comfortable with change is essential for anyone in the healthcare field. Successful pharmacy technicians are willing to learn, question, verify appropriately, and collaborate well with others. Always remember that a patient is on the receiving end of our actions, and even the smallest task matters.

**10. What hobbies or interests do you pursue outside of your role as a pharmacy technician? How do you find the balance between work and personal life?**

I have quite the variety of hobbies including powerlifting/CrossFit, crocheting, art, anything outdoors (just got a kayak!), and recently started on my sourdough bread making journey!