from Hoffman

Mademoiselle, Sept 63

EARL SEUBERT—PIX

Medical technologist

Not long ago a medical technologist performed mostly simple tests like blood counts—painstakingly adding the number of red, and then white, cells visible in a blood smear under a microscope. Today, however, and particularly if, like most technologists, she works in a hospital laboratory, she must have at her command an extensive repertoire of tests. In the modern hospital, an average of 127 tests, requiring thirteen hours of lab time, are run for a diabetic patient, for example, and new analyses, some calling for use of complex equipment, are developed almost daily. Even girls who were graduated from medical-technology schools as recently as Pat Koors, left (U. of Minnesota, 1960), must learn new procedures on the job.

One technologist, who works in the hematology lab of a modest city hospital, says, less as a complaint than as a boast: "Interns today test for everything. After about three minutes with a patient, they can order up enough tests to keep ten of us busy for a week." Labs *are* busy; in fact, while the ratio of physicians to patients has decreased in U.S. hospitals, the ratio of lab personnel to patients has gone up sharply.

Yet, many hospital labs are still so short of help that, as one med tech says, "Anyone who can hold a pipette can get a job." More and more, however, the best jobs go to registered technologists rather than to less-well-trained technicians or lab assistants (although final authority in a lab is held by a pathologist).

To become a med tech, a girl must now spend three years in college, concentrating in chemistry and biology, and a year at a medical-technology school approved by the American Medical Association. (There are seven hundred sixty of them—almost all in hospitals.) She must then pass a written registration exam sponsored by the American Society of Clinical Pathologists. An M. T. (ASCP), as she is now known, earns $80 a week to start; and she can make $150 and more in supervisory jobs—scheduling and doing clinical tests.

One unfortunate result of the shortage of laboratory hands has been the proliferation of commercial medical-technology schools, which train high school graduates at substantial tuition fees, often in substandard labs. In some, students, who are ostensibly learning to detect disease, never even see abnormal blood or tissue specimens. Graduates of the commercial schools may be "certified" by one of three competing self-styled "registries," and they may get hospital jobs. But they usually must be retrained to do adequate testing. Even then they do mostly routine work under the supervision of an M. T. (ASCP). Point one in becoming a medical technologist is to learn the job where it's done properly—in a hospital.

Even as a freshman med-tech major at the U. of Minnesota, Pat Koors attended some classes in the university hospitals. During her fourth, or apprenticeship, year, she and a class of forty rotated tours of duty in the various labs—pathology, chemistry, bacteriology, hematology, electrocardiogram, and blood bank. After passing the ASCP exam, Pat applied for and got a job in the blood bank. Her current job there is managing the supply of blood for open-heart surgery. Arriving at the hospital as early as 6:30 a.m. (surgery frequently begins then), she checks the refrigerator's blood supply for the day's operations; orders blood for forthcoming operations from local blood banks or donors; and retests new supplies for the main blood groupings and all six Rh factors. She remains on call during surgery, sometimes in her lab, sometimes, as shown left, in the gallery above the operating room, in case the patient hemorrhages and emergency supplies are needed.

The daughter of an amateur scientist, from the little town of Hinckley, Minnesota, Pat took a med-tech course in college to "get as close to medicine as I could." If she and her husband decide she should go on in medicine, it will be to a master's (and an instructorship) in medical technology.

Other girls use med-tech training and the jobs they can get with it as educational and financial backing for graduate work in the sciences.

For a list of A.M.A. approved schools (and information about requirements, tuition, if any, and scholarships) write: Registry of Medical Technologists, Muncie, Indiana. For jobs, check, besides hospitals, physicians' private labs, industrial or pharmaceutical firms, doctors' offices, state or Federal civil service.