

# AMT Member Spotlight

AMT is the national certification agency and membership association of allied health professionals. Our members are the reason our quality certifications are making a difference in healthcare. Read about the characteristics that set AMT members apart.

## Soobia Ashraf, MT

Medical technologist Soobia Ashraf, MT(AMT) did not follow the typical path to become director of laboratory services at Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center, where she oversees 75 staff members and more than 1.5 million laboratory tests per year.

Starting out as a laboratory assistant while completing her BS in biology from Dominican University, Soobia was preparing to apply for pharmacy school once she graduated. Upon her graduation, she was offered the role of support service lab supervisor with 25 direct reports. The promotion, along with the desire since childhood to follow in her father's footsteps in the laboratory workplace, caused her to change her mind and stay in the lab.

As Soobia delved into the position, she was introduced to the lean Six Sigma process improvement methodology. She became especially interested in processes and employee engagement while growing as a leader, and because of this chose to continue down the path of health care management and earned an MBA from Colorado Tech University.

Associate engagement and process improvement became Soobia's passion, and she describes the philosophy as "we must own our processes and tasks." Although she now had the management education, Soobia realized she was missing the foundational education of the theory behind lab science, and she decided to pursue the AAS in Clinical Lab Science from Weber State University. Upon completing this degree, she was eligible to sit for her AMT Medical Technologist certification exam.



**Certified: Change Agent**

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On her decision to become certified, Soobia believes certification strengthens her credibility and shows her seriousness and dedication to the field. "Certification gave my degree a stamp of approval. For me, it was a personal journey. It has been a big part of my career development." Upon completing her clinical lab science program, Soobia was promoted to her current position as a director of laboratory services. A change agent and problem solver by nature, this position is a good fit for Soobia, who works to lead her team in processes that enhance the patient experience and achieve positive outcomes.

When asked what she found most rewarding about her career, Soobia replied "In my role, I have the ability to inspire good morale, and I see my team put the patient first."

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To those interested in entering the medical lab field, Soobia would say that it is a promising and fulfilling career. "When you know that 70% of patient treatment can be determined by lab tests on a patient, you understand the weight of responsibility on your shoulders. This career is another name for a superhero behind the mask." She also notes that it's important to be a good listener, apprentice and trainer. Being able to collaborate effectively is also an important characteristic to possess.

When she isn't working, Soobia loves to teach her children and learn alongside them. Her kids now visit her in the lab the same way she visited her father's lab as a child, and she is amazed by how much a child can absorb. In the advancing world of science, she often discusses new technologies, such as genetics and molecular biology.

After learning about genes, her children - 10, 7 and 3 - took the initiative to research genetically modified cats, since they wanted a cat but Soobia is allergic. Although they have yet to adopt a genetically modified cat, Soobia was proud of her children for thinking this way.

Soobia even brings her process improvement skills home to teach the kids. "We do safety huddles around the table. For example, toys that caused someone to trip, seatbelt safety and illness are all examples of what we talk about. The kids are so in tune with safety precautions and teachable moments that they talk to their friends and cousins about it." says Soobia.

In the future, Soobia wants to continue her work on process improvement and become a motivational speaker. With evidence-based practices linking goal achievements to effective leadership and motivation, Soobia is well-equipped to serve those ready to undergo a transformation.



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