



Canadian Fertility and Andrology Society
Société canadienne de fertilité et d'andrologie

A short history of the development of the CFAS ART Laboratory professionals' competences and qualifications guidelines and the certification program.

Following the publication of the Assisted Human Reproduction (AHR) Act in 2004, the law was intended to lead to regulations that would cover all aspects of assisted human reproduction including the regulation of those who worked in the Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) laboratories. Members of the CFAS ART Laboratory SIG at the time believed that it was in the interest of ART Laboratory professionals that any guidelines be developed within the Society by members of the profession. With the support of the AHR Agency which was a government organisation created by the AHR Act to oversee application of the law and the anticipated regulations, a subcommittee was struck to create guidelines which could then be used as the reference for future regulations.

The Committee on Professional Standards of the ART Lab SIG comprised six senior Laboratory and Scientific Directors from across Canada. Through multiple meetings supported by the AHR Agency, and with information surveyed from all the clinics in the country, the committee produced a series of guidelines to form the basis of professional recognition for ART Laboratory Professionals in Canada. The first of these guidelines was presented to the CFAS ART Laboratory membership in 2007 and was approved by the SIG as well as the CFAS Board of directors and published. This first guideline was related to qualifications and responsibilities of each ART laboratory professional position in Canada. It considered the different models of laboratory structure that existed at the time in Canadian ART laboratories. It also outlined that all individuals who were working as ART Laboratory professionals at the time must be grandfathered so that even if their qualifications did not match the guideline requirements, they would be able to continue to work in their chosen field. This was important since it was critical that no one was unable to work due to the new guidelines.

Further guidelines were published soon after including a Professional Code of Conduct, Competency Profiles for ART laboratory professionals and a guideline on the creation of an in-lab training manual. At the time of the creation of these documents it was envisaged that an embryology and andrology post graduate course would be developed in Canada and that this would become a prerequisite for Canadian ART Laboratory Professionals in addition to the competencies and qualifications outlined in the published guidelines. As it became clear that this option was not a short-term solution, the Committee on Professional Standards looked at a different option to ensure that Canadian ART Lab professionals were competent in their work.



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As a result, the certification program was developed. It consists of an examination which assesses knowledge of the competencies outlined in the guideline, a logbook to assess technical competence and a short case report. At the time of publishing the certification program, it was essential that all active ART Laboratory professionals were able to continue in their role and that there would be no disruption to care across the country. As a result, all ART Laboratory professionals with a minimum of 2 years active experience at the time could apply for grandfathering and if successful became certified embryologists or andrologists. A grandfathering process was developed and later expanded to Laboratory and Scientific Directors. This step was essential so that there were certified Laboratory and Scientific Directors to permit the certification of new embryologists and andrologists and to ensure that appropriate training was carried out. The grandfathering process was always viewed as a transition process to maintain ART Laboratory services in Canada while developing a more comprehensive and robust certification program with the help of organizations specialized in competency evaluation such as the Touchtone Institute in Toronto and with the support of the CFAS.

In order to maintain their certification ART Laboratory Professionals have to provide evidence of Continuing Professional Credit (CPD) on a 24 month schedule and remain members of the CFAS.

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