

Medical Device Reprocessing Technician program

Applicants wanted by Heidi Riley

“In the next few years, about 30 percent of our current staff members in this department will be retiring,” says **Susan MacKinnon**, Manager of the Sterile Processing Department (SPD) at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Charlottetown. “We need to start gearing up to replace them.”

There are 42 Medical Device Reprocessing Technicians working at the QEH at present. Three other PEI hospitals employ MDPTs:

- Prince County Hospital has six to eight Technicians
- Kings County Memorial Hospital has one Technician
- Western Hospital has one Technician

What they do

After a procedure done in the Operating Room, in Ambulatory Care, or in Emergency, the surgical instruments are returned to the SPD to be properly cleaned, disinfected and sterilized, ready for re-use.

Working conditions

“This department is a great place to be,” says Susan. “We are a very happy and committed group.” Shifts run from 7 am to midnight. In the future, a night shift may be required, because surgery related to emergencies such as broken ankles and hips is often done at night.

Wages

Wages start at about \$23/hr. It is a unionized workplace, and employees are entitled to benefits, paid holidays, and pension plans.

The impact of the job

“Staff play a big role in infection control. If we do not clean and disinfect the instruments properly, patients will get sick. Our main focus is patient safety. We can’t afford to make mistakes, because if the tray of instruments isn’t right, the surgery is cancelled.”

Education

A number of institutions across Canada offer training for this role. The QEH works closely with Saskatchewan Polytechnic (SIAST). The program offers online coursework in microbiology, infection control, decontamination, sterilization, packaging, and instrumentation, combined with hands-on experience. There is also a 400-hour unpaid practicum.

For more information about the SIAST program, visit www.saskpolytech.ca/programs and search **Medical Device Reprocessing Technician**.



Some of the Medical Device Reprocessing Technicians at the QEH in Charlottetown include, from left: Lori Hughes, Kelley Rhynes, Susan MacKinnon, Theresa Horne, Jennifer Dunn, Michele Shepard, Cissy Johnson, and Jason Keep.

Financing your education

Tuition for the 10-month online program is about \$2,500 to \$3,000. Contact SkillsPEI at www.skillspei.com or Career Development Services at www.cdspei.ca to find out if you are eligible for financial assistance to cover the cost of the program.

For more information or to take a tour of the SPD at the QEH, contact **Susan MacKinnon** at **902-894-2295** or email smackinnon@gov.pe.ca



For the full interview, visit www.employmentjourney.com and search **Medical Device Reprocessing**.

Biotechnology week on PEI

by Heidi Riley

Over 1,500 people work at more than 50 bioscience companies on PEI. An expansion at BioVectra, awards to PEI bioscience companies and people in the industry, and news about emerging companies were all part of the kick-off to celebrating Biotechnology week on PEI.

“The Canadian biotech industry is linked from coast to coast by the regional expertise of universities, incubators, individual entrepreneurs, pre-commercial companies, multinationals, and investors all working together to drive biotech solutions forward,” says **Andrew Casey**, President and CEO, BIOTECANADA.

“PEI is a vibrant community in terms of what it contributes to biotechnology,” says **Ron Keefe**, who was recognized for playing a big part in fostering game-changing innovation in this industry. “I truly believe this is only the beginning. Successive governments have been very supportive of biotechnology, and we need continued investment in infrastructure and education to grow this part of our economy.”

A new player in the PEI Biotech business community: PFERA Inc.

Lisa Pfister has combined her engineering background and her passion for horses to become the CEO and founder of PFERA Inc., a company that is developing technology that can accurately predict when a horse will give birth.

“In extreme cases, a horse’s pregnancy can last between 318 and 391 days,” says Lisa. “There is a 73-day range in which the mare could give birth. Horses generally give birth at night, and an unattended or difficult birth can be life threatening to the mare and the foal. If something goes wrong and if a skilled foaling attendant or veterinarian is not there, the mare and foal could be lost.”

PFERA Inc. has developed a system that tests the mare’s milk for chemical changes that help predict when the mare will give birth. They are building on previous knowledge about mare milk changes by leveraging technology and statistics. The milk analysis kit can be used by anyone, and is easily linked to a smartphone via Bluetooth.

Lisa has already used this system with her own horse, which was due in late spring. The milk analysis system was able to predict accurately to the day when her mare gave birth.

“Our goal is to provide user-friendly software that any farmer, breeder, or veterinarian can use in a barn. We are building on this technology with a breeding management software tool that helps horse breeders and veterinarians better manage their time and resources when breeding their mares and managing the health of their herd.”

PFERA Inc. is working with a veterinary scientist who is undertaking the analytics of the pilot study results and setting up clinical trials in Canada.

There is also a Chief Technology Officer, who is experienced in hardware development and IT. There is also someone doing field testing of mares.

“As we continue to grow, we will need to hire people located throughout PEI, Ontario, and other jurisdictions to do in-field sampling and testing. They should be comfortable around horses, have a science background to understand how to take the samples, and be motivated to work hard.

“We are about a year away from commercialization.

We have done a pilot study and we are on our fourth-generation prototype. Next spring, we plan to launch clinical trials in the northern and southern hemispheres. We have seen lots of interest around the world for this technology, and we have had a surprisingly large interest from Australia and New Zealand.”

For more information about PFERA Inc., visit www.pfera.ca

For more about the PEI BioAlliance, visit www.peibioalliance.com



Lisa Pfister, CEO of PFERA Inc. and a recent Masters of Engineering graduate from the University of New Brunswick.

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