

Tip of the Month



Phlebotomy Road Trip

To be a great phlebotomist, you have to believe life is a trip. That's because you view each day as a new journey you take with your patients. Sometimes it's an adventure into the "great unknown" with many twists, turns and bumps in the road. Other days the pavement is smooth, the potholes rare. You stay the course and steady the wheel. Regardless of the conditions encountered, with the proper knowledge, skills and abilities, great phlebotomists help guide their patients on the road to recovery and better health.

Traffic jams—Nobody likes getting stuck in traffic, including the gridlock that can occur in outpatient phlebotomy areas. To prevent patients from marking you off their itinerary and making a hasty exit, keep wait times to a minimum.

Defensive driving—Do you conduct a thorough survey of both arms before making the basilic vein your needle's destination? Great phlebotomists prioritize veins for safety and never operate a needle under the influence of inadequate training.

Watch for warning signs—Like gauges on a dashboard, great phlebotomists monitor their patients for adverse reactions. Extreme fear can be a sign of needle phobia. Pallor, perspiration, dizziness, hyperventilation, anxiety and nausea point toward an imminent loss of consciousness. While numbness, tingling or an electric-like sensation during the draw signals a nerve has been provoked.

Leave no trace—Like outdoor enthusiasts, great phlebotomists leave no lasting evidence of their presence when traveling from inpatient to inpatient. You won't find hematomas recklessly dotting the landscape of their patients' limbs due to improper equipment or poor technique. They perform a two-point check for bleeding before bandaging because they know site preservation is crucial to the success of future draws as well as to the patient's care and comfort. They also leave the patient's environment the way they found it, by removing used supplies and returning furniture and belongings to their original position.

Roadside assistance—Great phlebotomists don't hesitate to enlist the aid of willing parents or coworkers when full cooperation from a patient (e.g., pediatric, cognitively-impaired) is uncertain. If your facility provides AAA (ample available assistance), use it.

Road tripping technology—Even great phlebotomists encounter veins that lead them to a dead-end. If your patient population consists of difficult draws, it might be time to consider vein-locator technology.

Maintenance schedule—To achieve and maintain peak performance, great phlebotomists schedule professional tune-ups in the form of continuing education reflective of current CLSI standards and OSHA regulations. Every year (or 3,000 patients), they kick the tires of their technique by participating in competence assessments.

Think life's a trip? You do if you're a great phlebotomist.