



**Article:**

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**Guest:** Dr. Khushbu Patel is an assistant professor of pathology and laboratory medicine at the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine and the director of clinical chemistry at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Dr. Yachana Kataria is the medical director of clinical chemistry at Boston Medical Center and is an assistant professor of pathology and laboratory medicine at Boston University.

Randy Kay:

Hello and welcome to this edition of JALM Talk from the *Journal of Applied Laboratory Medicine*, a publication of the American Association for Clinical Chemistry. I'm your host, Randy Kaye. Doctoral level clinical chemists have unique training backgrounds. They may work in a variety of settings including academic medical centers, health systems, reference laboratories, and the diagnostics industry. However, information regarding the compensation and benefits received by employed doctoral level clinical chemists is scarce. Current real-world salary data is needed to allow clinical chemists to effectively advocate for equal and fair compensation and benefits. Fortunately, a special report from the November 20, 2021 issue of *JALM* describes the findings of a PhD board-certified clinical chemist compensation survey. This survey was completed by AACC's Society of Young Clinical Laboratorians or SYCL. On today's podcast we are joined by two members of the AACC SYCL core committee who contributed to the authorship of this special report. Dr. Khushbu Patel is an assistant professor of pathology and laboratory medicine at the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine and the director of clinical chemistry at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Dr. Yachana Kataria is the medical director of clinical chemistry at Boston Medical Center and is an assistant professor of pathology and laboratory medicine at Boston University. Welcome doctors Patel and Kataria. First, Dr. Patel, can you give us some background about the SYCL clinical chemist compensation survey and how it was conducted?

Khushbu Patel:

Sure. So this was the fourth compensation survey launched by SYCL, which collected data in February of 2021. Prior such surveys were conducted in 2010, 2013 and 2018. As with prior surveys, the survey was administered online asking questions related to compensation and benefits. In the current survey, all AACC members holding doctoral degrees and residing in the United States and Canada were invited to participate. An e-mail invitation was sent out to over 1,500 members of which 208 responded, 113 of those respondents were ABCC certified clinical chemists residing in the U.S. This

was a subgroup that we focused our compensation analysis on. However aggregate data on all survey participants and a separate evaluation for Canadian respondents can be found in the online supplement of the manuscript.

Randye Kaye: Thank you. Next question for you Dr. Kataria. What would you say are the major findings of the survey?

Yachana Kataria: Thank you. We found that most respondents worked either in an academic hospital or healthcare system setting. We found that among the ABCC certified clinical chemists the median compensation range was a 180 to 189,000. The 25th percentile compensation range was a 150 to 159,000, whereas the 75th percentile was reported to be 230 to 239,000. We also observed a correlation of salary with years of experience and academic rank. However, there was no apparent trend in compensation among geographical groupings either based on region or cost of living.

Randye Kaye: All right. Thank you. Now I know that a similar compensation survey was conducted and published in JALM back in 2018. Dr. Patel, can you compare and contrast those 2018 survey findings to the 2021 survey findings?

Khushbu Patel: Yeah, absolutely. So participation wise, we had a similar number of respondents across both surveys. Overall we did see an increase in compensation with median salaries of ABCC certified U.S. respondents trending upwards after adjusting for inflation. There are a couple of key differences in the current survey and how it was conducted compared to 2018 that we would like to point out. The first difference is that in the 2021 survey we asked respondents to report their total compensation whereas in the 2018 survey the base salary and bonus or incentives were reported separately. And secondly, we also added geographical groupings based on regions of the country in addition to groupings based on a cost-of-living index that was used in the 2018 survey solely. We made these changes to align our data with other sources frequently used by employers such as the AAMC faculty survey report to allow for direct comparison.

Randye Kaye: All right, thank you. Now, I know that other organizations such as the Association of American Medical Colleges or AAMC did their own surveys.

So how does the data from this year's AACC SYCL survey compared to data from other surveys?

Yachana Kataria: Yeah. So the 2020 median total compensation for PhD in clinical pathology assistant professors was reported to be 161,000 by the Association of American Medical Colleges also known as AAMC. Whereas the SYCL survey, we report a slightly higher median total compensation range. If you

recall, I had said 180 to 189,000 for our board-certified PhD assistant professors. Now these differences may be attributable to the timing and the method of data collection. Additionally, the AACC SYCL data is representative of only ABCC board-certified clinical chemists where the AAMC data also includes PhD's without the ABCC board certification. And additionally in our survey we did find that respondents with ABCC certification, they reported higher salaries.

Randye Kaye: Thanks Dr. Kataria. While I have you, are there any other findings from this year's survey that you would like to share?

Yachana Kataria: Yes, absolutely. In the online version of the manuscript. You'll see supplemental data that shows you the data from the entire survey. So I definitely highly encourage interested readers to review that. And generally speaking, we see a lot of variability in bonus structures. More specifically bonuses could vary anywhere from none to over \$100,000.00. Additionally, we found that 93% respondents did receive some sort of additional funding that can be applied to either travel, CE credits, books or other scholarly activities. I think it's also important to highlight that overall, most participants self-reported that they are satisfied or very satisfied with their annual compensation.

Randye Kaye: All right. Thank you. And for you Dr. Patel, just one final question. What do you think the future will have in store for this survey? And will there be another version?

Khushbu Patel: Yes. Sure. So in future surveys, we definitely hope to increase overall engagement and responses from all AACC members, including our Canadian colleagues. We do like to continually assess the impact of this initiative and whether members find this data beneficial. So in this survey, we asked some supplemental questions to probe how members were using this data and 74% of the respondents indicated that they found the 2018 survey results either extremely valuable or very valuable. And over 50% of the respondents requested that the survey be repeated every two years. Therefore, we hope to continue to monitor trends in compensation and benefit over the years and be a resource for not only clinical chemists that are on the job market but also employers looking to hire such highly trained individuals.

Randye Kaye: All right. Thank you. Very interesting. Thank you so much for joining us today.

Khushbu Patel: Thank you.

Yachana Kataria: Thank you for having us.

Randye Kaye: That was Drs. Khushbu Patel and Yachana Kataria from the AACC SYCL core committee discussing the JALM special report

entitled "The 2021 PhD Board Certified Clinical Chemist Compensation Survey". Thanks for tuning in to this episode of JALM Talk. See you next time and don't forget to submit something for us to talk about.