

On Sunday, January 10, 2016, Michael Bittles wrote:  
Dear Dr. Vander Broek:

I would like to clarify one of the comments made at my recent testimony before the 407 committee considering the application for licensure of surgical technologists.

When discussing "tissue manipulation" during surgery I tried to make the point that if holding a surgical retractor is defined as tissue manipulation then surgical technologists **SHOULD** be able to hold retractors if requested by the surgeon. I made the comment that "you could teach a monkey to hold retractors." I did not mean to disparage surgical technologists or the important role that they play during the performance of an operation. If this was construed as such, then I apologize to any member of the committee or audience who may have been offended.

My opinion regarding other sorts of "tissue manipulation" such as suturing or harvesting veins or bone is that these should not be performed by surgical technologists. A general statement that surgical technologists should not "manipulate tissue" may prevent a surgical technologist from holding tissue retractors, which is an important role that a surgical technologist may occasionally be asked to do and is certainly well within their abilities.

Respectfully,  
Michael J. Bittles, M.D., FACS