

FOUNDING BOARD OF NUCLEAR MEDICINE HONORED AS PIONEERS

AS ONE OF THE FOUNDING MEMBERS of the American Board of Nuclear Medicine (ABNM), I speak on behalf of the entire board and say we are most appreciative of the distinction of the George Charles de Hevesey Nuclear Medicine Pioneer Award of the Society of Nuclear Medicine. In 1968, 12 highly independent physicians from diverse backgrounds and medical specialties were enlisted to form the Proponents of the ABNM. We all had in common an interest in nuclear medicine and a dedication to provide opportunities for the education, training and certification of physicians wishing to practice nuclear medicine. Nine of the original founders are alive, moderately well and, hopefully, happy. I will tell you of our odyssey—both its successes and failures.

It all began when Merrill Bender, MD, president of the Society of Nuclear Medicine (SNM), was approached in 1967 by Frederick Bonte, MD, and Richard King, MD, of the American Board of Radiology. They suggested that the SNM sponsor the development of a certifying board for the speciality of nuclear medicine. The Society approved this recommendation, and the Proponents of the ABNM were established with three representatives from each of the four sponsors: SNM, the American Board of Radiology, the American Board of Internal Medicine and the American Board of Pathology.

For such a diverse and independent group of physicians, the Proponents worked together remarkably well. We had no serious disagreements concerning the goals to be met or procedures to be followed in order to establish the Board. We founders developed the Articles of Incorporation, the Bylaws and the Policies of Operation.

In 1971, the ABNM was incorporated as a “con-joint board” with sponsoring boards of internal medicine, pathology and radiology. The Board developed its first certifying examination with the cooperation of the National Board of Medical Examiners. We announced that the first certifying exam would be given in 1972.

Then the roof fell in! The American Board of Medical Specialties mandated that all certificates of specialization to be awarded by the Board must be contingent upon the successful passing of a written examination. The American Board of Radiology had already awarded about 400 “medallions” to their diplomats who they considered qualified to practice nuclear medicine. The American College of Radiology demanded that radiologists who had been so

recognized be awarded certificates of specialization by the ABNM—without needing to pass a written examination. The ABNM was willing to acquiesce to this demand, but the Board of Medical Specialties would not permit us to do so.

Consequently, both the Board and College of Radiology demanded that the ABNM withdraw its planned certifying examination or else they would not approve the founding of the new board. In an attempt to resolve this impasse, the American Board of Medical Specialties authorized the American Board of Radiology to issue a certificate of subspecialization in “nuclear radiology,” which is still



issued today. It also authorized the American Board of Pathology to issue a Certificate of Subspecialization in “radioisotopic pathology”.

This was a severe blow to ABNM. These occurrences caused us a great deal of stress and Merrill Bender, chairman of ABNM, suffered from a cerebral hemorrhage.

Still, the ABNM survived and prevailed. We offered the first certifying examination in 1972 and issued 940 certificates of specialization in nuclear medicine. The Board was granted independent primary board status in 1985, which allowed us to greatly simplify our operations. We no longer have to get our policies nor our new board members approved by the three original sponsoring boards.

During the past 24 years, the policies of operation have been expanded, but those laid down by the founding members are still operative. Fifty distinguished nuclear medicine physicians have served on the Board and 4158 highly competent nuclear medicine physicians have been certified.

Joseph Ross, MD

The founding members of the American Board of Nuclear Medicine. Back row, left to right: David E. Kuhl, MD, Richard E. Peterson, MD, E. Richard King, MD, Paul V. Harper, MD, Tyra T. Hutchens, MD, Ralph M. Kniseley, MD, Frederick J. Bonte, MD, Joseph P. Kriss, MD. Front row, left to right: Joseph F. Ross, MD, Merrill A. Bender, MD, Henry N. Wagner, MD, W. Newlon Tauxe, MD.