



# ICANL Accreditation: A Sign of the Times . . . and the Future

**E**ight years ago, SNM and SNMTS recognized the importance of having an independent accrediting body for nuclear medicine, PET, and nuclear cardiology laboratories. Joining with the Academy of Molecular Imaging, the American College of Cardiology, the American College of Nuclear Physicians, and the American Society of Nuclear Cardiology, the Society strongly supported the development of an independent, multidisciplinary accrediting organization: the Intersocietal Commission for the Accreditation of Nuclear Medicine Laboratories (ICANL).

The importance of this action continues to grow, especially considering the many changes occurring with medical insurance reimbursement. Third-party payers realize that not all facilities provide the same level of service and quality of patient care. Medical insurance companies are beginning to look toward voluntary accreditation programs utilizing peer review to demonstrate quality and validate payment for certain services—"pay for performance." This could transform the way physicians and hospitals are paid. Some commercial plans have already implemented pay-for-performance policies. Medicare, the nation's largest payer, appears to be headed down that path, with its first public pay-for-performance demonstration set to launch this month and run for the next 3 years. "It is time that we pay for the quality of the health care provided to our beneficiaries, not simply the amount," said an administrator for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services recently.

Some providers have now enacted reimbursement policies that require laboratory accreditation. For example, compensation is tied to accreditation for nuclear cardiology and/or PET laboratories, affecting molecular/nuclear medicine imaging procedures in 6 states: Alabama, Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. Similar payment policies are pending throughout the country.

What does this mean for you? When health care organizations are being held to increasingly high levels of accountability by the general public, by their peers, and by Medicare and other payers, an ICANL accreditation provides the way for laboratories to evaluate and demonstrate the level of patient care they provide.

An ICANL accreditation is a symbol that represents a commitment to quality. It lets third-party payers—and the general public—know that they can expect a higher level of

service efficiency, quality, and safety and a higher level of patient care. Laboratories that attain accreditation before it's required for reimbursement demonstrate a willingness to surpass current expectations.

ICANL has standards in place that address issues such as lab operation, performance, and interpretation and reducing errors and variation in clinical practice—factors behind the motivation for pay for performance. ICANL's standards define minimum requirements for nuclear medicine, PET, and nuclear cardiology labs to deliver high-quality care. Through ICANL's accreditation process, laboratories assess every aspect of daily operation, often revising protocols and validating quality assurance programs. Because accreditation must be renewed every 3 years, accredited laboratories must commit to and maintain quality and self-assessment programs.



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SNM Executive Director

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ICANL is one of the few available accrediting bodies for general nuclear medicine, PET, and nuclear cardiology facilities, and it is the only one that incorporates mandatory site visits of all applicant laboratories. This last requirement was mandated by SNM when it merged its own accreditation program with ICANL. Members of each sponsoring organization

sit on the ICANL board of directors, providing an arm's-length arrangement that allows for independent peer review of facilities.

To date, there are nearly 650 ICANL-accredited sites—a fraction of the possibly thousands of private offices, clinics, and hospitals in this country. As we hear more talk about pay for performance, more facilities will apply for accreditation. Last year, the number of ICANL applicant laboratories nearly doubled from the previous year.

Keep an eye to the future—no one wants to be at the bottom of the list that says "quality" on top.

*More information about the ICANL accreditation program can be found online at <http://www.icanl.org>.* ✨