



# Our Preferred Future

**A**s physicians, technologists, and scientists, we strive to be wise and enlightened guides to the young women and men who are our profession's future. We discuss—and often passionately express—our feelings about the necessary level of education needed for entry into the molecular and nuclear imaging profession. Future professionals—our residents, fellows, and recent graduates—debate this educational issue as well—most recently in online discussions on the Young Professionals Committee (YPC) listserv.

These discussions indicate that there is concern about the future job market of nuclear medicine physicians. Will newly graduated nuclear medicine physicians be able to find positions? The overall positive impression is that most recent American Board of Nuclear Medicine (ABNM)—certified nuclear medicine physicians (72%) do find full-time positions within a year of graduation (79%), according to an informal, 28-question, online survey distributed by the YPC. Heather Jacene, MD, YPC chair, and Darlene F. Metter, MD, Academic Council president, acknowledge this concern. The council intends to investigate this issue on a national scale, document the facts, develop a national network, and build academic bridges with our radiology colleagues.

Does the current training address all the needs of young professionals? It's not surprising that survey respondents ranked knowledge of general nuclear medicine and PET/CT training as skills most necessary to receive a job offer. Many of our residents do not have a radiology background, and, in fact, many PET/CT practitioners may not be radiologists or current in CT. We know that molecular imaging will lead to a much greater ability to characterize diseases, diagnose them at a very early stage, treat them effectively, and monitor the effectiveness of such treatment. PET, PET/CT, SPECT, SPECT/CT, and other new techniques now in development have advanced our knowledge beyond any expectations, captivated the imagination of the current generation of professionals, and ignited the evolution of our profession.

The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME)—a private, nonprofit council that evaluates and accredits medical residency programs in the United States—recognizes that new, major technologies are being used and need to be included in educational training. As part of new ACGME requirements beginning in July 2007, the length of training for nuclear medicine residents

who have had only an internship will be increased from 2 to 3 years. In addition, the requirement for training in CT is “substantially strengthened.”

In response, ABNM, the primary certifying organization for nuclear medicine in the United States, is changing its formal requirements for entry to its certifying exam to match the ACGME Residency Review Committee program requirements, according to Christopher J. Palestro, MD, ABNM chair. On future examinations, candidates for both certification and recertification can expect an increasing emphasis on morphologic—especially cross-sectional—imaging studies and therapeutic medicine, he said.

Our young professionals—and our members—continue to look to SNM for answers, for training, and for a professional connection. We need to adapt to changes in technology, practice, and patients' needs. Is SNM at the forefront of this adaptation? Most definitely, yes. What is the preferred future we seek? It is one where molecular and nuclear imaging professionals must be versed in both functional and anatomic imaging—and SNM has taken up the educational challenge.

For young professionals, the society is a powerful resource, offering essential training opportunities, a network of personal contacts, a job bank, and inclusion on our many committees. For young professionals and members, SNM offers an essential collection of CT courses. In addition, as our Lifelong Learning and Self-Assessment Program (LLSAP) continues to grow over the year, Web-based modules will be available covering recent developments in molecular, nuclear, and correlative imaging in numerous specialty fields and basic sciences. The topics addressed will include the technical aspects, evaluation, and treatment of patients using CT, PET, PET/CT, SPECT, SPECT/CT, and therapy with unsealed radioactive sources. In recent good news, ABNM and the American Board of Radiology both approved several LLSAP modules for self-assessment continuing medical education credit.

As you can see, SNM is leading the way for the next generation of trained physicians who will have a bright future with extended educational opportunities. ✨



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