

# A PHYSICIAN'S VIEW OF THE TECHNOLOGIST SECTION

As a physician practicing nuclear medicine for 25 years, it has been my privilege to observe the growth of professionalism among nuclear medicine technologists and to participate with them in some of the developmental efforts that led to the organization of the Technologist Section of The Society of Nuclear Medicine. In this article, I will present my view of this organization on the occasion of its 15th birthday, including my current perspective as the Editor of *The Journal of Nuclear Medicine*.

The beginning of organized technologist activities in the Society began in earnest in 1966 with the formation of local technologist groups at the chapter level. In 1968, as the then Chairman of the Committee on Technologists, I presided at meetings of the Committee at the Annual Meetings of the Society in St. Louis and again, in 1969, in New Orleans, where a national council of chapter technologist representatives met and formulated the resolutions that led to the establishment of the Technologist Section in 1970.

My main recollection of those meetings is of a great many committed young professionals in the field of nuclear medicine technology making decisions that would affect their lives and those of others for years to come. Those of us from the physician and scientist segments of the Society lent our advice and counsel, but ultimately this was a grass roots technologist phenomenon that continues to amaze me in the results that have been achieved. In many ways these young people were anticipating the upwardly mobile young professional movement that is so celebrated now in the 1980s.

The major achievements of this Section during its first 15 years were the establishment of the Joint Review Committee for the Accreditation of Nuclear Medicine Technology Programs and the Nuclear Medicine Technology Certification Board (NMTCB) for the examination and registration of the graduates of the almost 150 schools that have gained approval. Most of the early technologists received on-the-job training, but they have done well in providing for those who came after, in assuring a more formalized curriculum in nuclear medicine technology training.

Equally important, however, is the support that the Section has given to continuing education of its members through its meetings and publications. In the rapidly changing field of nuclear medicine, obsolescence is a constant threat. Through its VOICE program and the recent retesting of successful NMTCB candidates, the ability of technologists to maintain and advance their skills has been facilitated and measured, and the quality of patient care and research in nuclear medicine technology has been assured.

Nuclear medicine technologists have always been characterized, in my experience, by a desire to participate in the research and development that leads to advances in the practice of nuclear medicine. Many times, this is the attraction that draws technologists from other specialties to nuclear medicine. The nuclear medicine technologist who has the ability to plan, conduct, and report scientific research needs a forum for the presentation and exchange of new information. The Section has provided this forum through its scientific program and exhibits at meetings and through the publication of its *Journal*.

Finally, the Section has performed an important service to the Society and its members in the political and socio-economic arena. Many issues, such as credentialing, have been addressed and expert opinion has been provided to the Society and to the government through the auspices of the Technologist Section. This unified direction has been very effective in achieving a positive approach to problems. Through education of technologists in management techniques and other administrative skills, the Section has also aided in the smooth running of departments of nuclear medicine everywhere.

After 15 years of successful advocacy, the Technologist Section is now in a position to face a challenging future with confidence. We all know of the new technologies that are coming into the field (i.e., SPECT, PET, NMR, and monoclonal antibodies). These technologies are truly impressive in their potential to permit better care for our patients. However, they require intense study to master. We are also aware of the changing economics of nuclear medicine with the threat posed by the prospective reimbursement programs.

Whatever the future, I am convinced that The Society of Nuclear Medicine remains the best answer for the physician, scientist, and technologist seeking an organization that educates, promotes research, and fosters the best in professionalism for the specialty of nuclear medicine. As the new Editor of *The Journal of Nuclear Medicine*, I am looking for ways to contribute to this integrative function in the *Journal*. To advise me on technologist affairs, I have appointed the Editor of the *Journal of Nuclear Medicine Technology*, Paul E. Christian, CNMT, to the Editorial Board of *The Journal of Nuclear Medicine*, and I have included technologists as assistant editors on the editorial staff. *The Journal of Nuclear Medicine* is for all members of the Society, and although the high scientific standards set for its publication require discrimination in selecting articles, I know that there are many technologist authors able to meet those standards, and I welcome the submission of their work.

I also believe that it would be best for the Society if the *Journal of Nuclear Medicine Technology* was for all members of the Society, and not just for the members of the Technologist Section. As an honorary member of the Section, I receive and regularly read *JNMT*, and I have found the articles very helpful in updating and expanding my fund of knowledge about nuclear medicine. I hope that eventually every member of the Society will regularly receive and read both journals so that *JNM* and *JNMT* can become partners in the provision of information

to all members of The Society of Nuclear Medicine. This will assure that the Society moves forward confidently united in its great mission—to serve the profession and the public by further developing the great potential of nuclear applications in medicine.

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