

NMTCB REPORT

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Chairperson

Although the Board has not met since the last NMTCB Report, we continue to keep abreast of several important issues affecting both current and future certificants.

We are monitoring the activities of the American Medical Association's (AMA) Council on Allied Health Education and Accreditation (CAHEA) as plans are made for restructuring that organization. If the committee responsible for presenting a new structure is successful in following its time schedule, CAHEA will dissolve in the fall of 1993. The AMA is committed to continue funding the new organization for another three years; thereafter, it will need to be self-supporting.

The implication for nuclear medicine programs, and thus the NMTCB, is that the accreditation body that provided the "stamp of approval" for NMTCB exam candidates will no longer exist. Representatives to the Joint Review Committee on Educational Programs in Nuclear Medicine Technology (JRCNMT) and CAHEA have indicated that the proposed timeline is optimistic. Nonetheless, the Board will be prepared to act in a timely manner regarding the newly proposed accreditation body. Exam candidates who rely upon graduation from an accredited program as evidence of their qualification for taking the NMTCB exam should be reassured that the Board will take steps to ensure the least disruption possible in recognizing any new accreditation body.

Of perhaps more importance to the approximately 12,000 current certificants is the result of the survey regarding continuing education. When the NMTCB renewal forms for 1993 were sent out, a short survey was attached asking about a number of issues, including a question about mandatory continuing education. Of those who had responded by the first week of February 1993, approximately 57% indicated that

Examination Dates The Nuclear Medicine Technology Certification Board 1993-1994

Year	Exam Date	Application Deadline
1993	June 26	April 17
1993	September 25	July 17
1994	June 25	April 16
1994	September 24	July 16

For more information or to request an application, contact:

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continuing education should be required to maintain certification.

Regardless of the Board's ultimate decision, there will no doubt be strong feelings on both sides of the issue. Most nuclear medicine technologists would probably agree on the need to keep abreast of the most current practices in the field. But making continuing education mandatory, whether for licensure, the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), or continued certification, is a much more complex issue. In addition to the philosophical discussions that are sure to take place, actual implementation, including record keeping and cost, must be addressed.

Mandatory continuing education in the broader sense has been widely debated by health professionals across the board. And over the years, most of them, including those in allied health, nursing, and medicine now require continuing ed-

ucation in order to practice in their chosen professions.

I think the operative word here is "professional." Much has been written about the dilemma that many technologists face in not being perceived as "professionals." By definition, professionals exercise broad autonomy in that they are part of a self-regulating body that set standards of education and practice. They demonstrate leadership within the community as to practice behavior, including a code of ethics. Professionals are perceived by society as experts, and while there are many rights and privileges associated with that perception, there are also many responsibilities. It is especially important to maintain high standards when the professional provides health care.

In the short time since its inception, nuclear medicine technology has matured rapidly in its pursuit of professionalism. We set our own standards of education and are about to dissolve our existing relationship with the AMA, in the belief that we can adequately monitor our educational programs. We have established a national certification exam administered by an organization that exemplifies our sense of autonomy in its motto, "certification of nuclear medicine technologists by nuclear medicine technologists." And we have a professional society with an academically recognized journal.

Regardless of the NMTCB Board's decision on whether to implement continuing education requirements, the Technologist Section is in an excellent position to demonstrate professional responsibility in ensuring that all nuclear medicine technologists have access to continuing education programs. Rather than wringing our hands over implementing higher standards of practice, we should look at the opportunities that continuing education provides to enhance our professional reputations.