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Age-Specific Competencies

The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) has reported that more than a third of hospitals surveyed during 1996 had difficulty meeting the standards for staff competency and specifically concerning age-specific competencies (1). Hospitals are required to assess the competency of non-physician clinical staff with close attention to age-specific qualifications. This standard, HR5, and other closely related standards are found in the chapter "Management of Human Resources" in the *Comprehensive Accreditation Manual for Hospitals: The Official Handbook* (2).

Qualifications are a person's education, training and experience. Assessment is a formal process of review during a new employee's orientation and during scheduled assessment reviews. Different patient groups have different and sometimes special needs, both physically and psychologically. The age-specific competencies refer to neonates, pediatric, adolescent, adult and elderly patient groups. JCAHO expects each organization to:

1. Define their patient populations.
2. Define the age groups within each patient population.
3. Define, in each clinical employee's job description and/or evaluation plan, which age groups the employee must be knowledgeable about.
4. Provide training to the employees on how to meet the age-specific needs of each patient population included in the job description and/or evaluation plan.
5. Evaluate how well each staff member takes care of patients in each age group served.

Beginning with this issue, the *Journal of Nuclear Medicine Technology* will provide continuing education articles to help nuclear medicine departments meet these requirements. We begin here with a series on the elderly and are developing a pediatric series. Each organization must complete items 1-3 of the JCAHO expectations listed above. The age-specific continuing edu-

cation articles can assist you in documenting 4 and 5. Each nuclear medicine technologist can document continuing education and knowledge competency by reading each article and successfully completing the continuing education test. The evaluation of psychomotor, critical thinking and interpersonal skills requires additional evaluation tools. Additional information is available in both the May/June 1995 (age-specific issues) and the August/September 1995 (competence assessments) issues of *Joint Commission Perspectives*.

Continuing Education Articles

All of the continuing education articles that appear in *JNMT* can be used to document continuing education and knowledge competency by reading each article and successfully completing the continuing education test. Topics for the continuing education articles are identified in multiple ways. The *JNMT* readers' survey, which is done every three years, gives global direction to the Continuing Education Article Subcommittee. In addition, new and developing procedures, trends and regulations are identified as topics for continuing education articles in *JNMT*. Joni Herbst is chair of the Continuing Education Committee and Sue Weiss is the coordinator of the

Continuing Education Article Subcommittee. Let one of us know if you have identified a learning need for yourself or other nuclear medicine technologists. In addition to the continuing education articles, *JNMT* also offers an "Ask the Expert" column for topics that can be addressed in a page or two.

The continuing education articles in *JNMT* are always highly rated on the readers' survey. In fact, the membership has encouraged us to routinely have three continuing education articles in the journal. In order to meet this goal, we need two things: more authors willing to write continuing education manuscripts and more volunteers to work on the Continuing Education Article Subcommittee.

We are working out the details to offer a stipend of \$250 for authors who write continuing education papers. All manuscripts are peer reviewed, including continuing education articles and other invited papers. The continuing education manuscripts must be written according to the *JNMT Style Manual* and must successfully complete the peer review process. The authors of continuing education papers that appear in *JNMT* make an important contribution to the practice of nuclear medicine technology. The Continuing Education Article Subcommittee, the editorial board and the Technologist Section membership appreciate the authors who write continuing education papers. It takes much time and effort to write each manuscript. It is a real service to our profession, since most of our members read every continuing education article we publish.

Working on the Continuing Education Article Subcommittee offers several opportunities. It provides an introductory experience to working on *JNMT* by following one article, or series of articles, from conception to publication. This process takes approximately one year, depending upon how much time the author needs to write the paper. Along the way, you will interact with the authors who are usually experts in their topics, learn basic proofreading and editing skills, and participate in your own continuing education. If you

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think you would like to work on the editorial board some day, this is an excellent place to start learning the processes involved in producing *JNMT*, one paper at a time. It is also satisfying to participate in the production of an informative article for your peers.

Journal of Nuclear Medicine Technology 1972–1997

This issue marks the beginning of the 25th anniversary year of the *Journal of Nuclear Medicine Technology*. Dayton Rich offers a special contribution on the history of PET to mark this occasion.

We will have additional special features throughout this year to mark this milestone. It has been my good fortune to serve as editor during a time of celebrations, beginning with the 25th anniversary of the Technologist Section during 1995, then the 1996 centennial of the discovery of radioactivity and now the 25th anniversary of the *Journal of Nuclear Medicine Technology*. Congratulations to the Technologist Section membership for supporting *JNMT* since 1972 and to all past and current authors, contributors, editors, reviewers, adver-

tisers and staff who have made *JNMT* what it is today.

REFERENCES

1. Type I of the month: age-specific competencies. In: MacDonald IG, ed. *Briefings on JCAHO-October 1996*. Marblehead, MA: Opus Communications, Inc.; 1996;7:10–12.
2. Management of human resources. In: *Comprehensive accreditation manual for hospitals: the official handbook*. Oakbrook Terrace, IL: Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations; 1996 (effective 1/1/97); HR-1-HR-30.