

# Letter to the Editor

## Where Have NMTs Gone?

Recently we attempted to answer the question "Where have NMTs gone?" for ourselves by surveying our graduates to learn their current employment status. We found that several had left the field. A closer look at ex-technologists and what they were doing brought up quite a different question: "Does education prior to admission to an NMT program have any predictive value for longevity as a technologist?" Although we accept students from several different backgrounds, we found that all of those who had left the field had a pre-entry level of a BS degree, and all of them had returned to school for more advanced study.

To determine if our experience was unique, we contacted other programs that, like ours, accept students from varied backgrounds for the following information:

- (1) Total numbers of graduates, according to sex
- (2) Total numbers of graduates of each sex according to pre-entry educational level. Education levels specified were:
  - (a) BS degree
  - (b) registered radiologic technologist
  - (c) two years of college in a science curriculum
- (3) Total numbers in each category remaining in nuclear medicine
- (4) Total numbers in each category who have left nuclear medicine
- (5) Reasons for graduates leaving the field (specifically, employment in other fields, further education, retirement, or other)

Response to the questionnaire was excellent; 47% were completed and returned. There was some confusion for programs that offered a BS degree in nuclear medicine to students matriculating with the specified pre-entry backgrounds. The clear-cut results represent a total of 883 graduates, 455 men and 428 women, and are listed in Table 1.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the data.

- (1) There is a relatively equal rate of attrition for men (15%) and women (13%).
- (2) Of those leaving the field, 50% or greater had a pre-entry level of a BS degree: 42 of 69 men (61%) and 29 of 55 women (53%).
- (3) Of those leaving the field, a high percentage are going back to school for further education: 47% of men, and 24% of women. It was not possible in all instances to identify the pre-entry level of graduates who fell into this category. However, in a very limited number of responses the distinction between graduates with BS degrees and those with RT backgrounds was clear. Of these, 27 of 30 (90%) BS students and 2 of 5 (40%) RT students were working toward a higher degree.
- (4) Adjustment of the total attrition rate for those who have

returned to college to further their education brings the percentage to 9% of men and 10% of women.

Additional information supplied on several questionnaires indicates that a number of radiologic technologists categorized as having "left the field" had either returned to radiology in some responsible position or were employed as technical representatives for nuclear medicine suppliers. Other questionnaires mentioned several women who had retired to pursue the career of homemaker.

As an educator, I find these figures very heartening. Our labors are not in vain. We choose our students carefully, looking for those who will be competent technologists on entry

**TABLE 1. Current Employment Status of Graduates of NMT Training Programs According to Pre-entry Educational Background**

	Total (%)	BS (%)	RT (%)	2 years of college (%)
Total graduates contacted				
Men	455	193 (42)	218 (48)	44 (10)
Women	428	141 (33)	234 (55)	53 (12)
Those remaining in nuclear medicine				
Men	386 (85)	151 (78)	193 (89)	42 (95)
Women	373 (87)	112 (79)	218 (93)	43 (81)
Those leaving nuclear medicine				
Men	69	42	25	2
% of total entering	(15)	(22)	(11)	(5)
% of total leaving		(61)	(36)	(3)
Women	55	29	16	10
% of total entering	(13)	(21)	(7)	(19)
% of total leaving		(53)	(29)	(18)

and will continue to grow and develop their full potential with the passing years. According to our data, the great majority of those we educate are happy in nuclear medicine and see it as a road leading to higher goals.

It may be desirable to investigate more carefully our applicants' reasons for wanting to study nuclear medicine technology before they are accepted. Some programs require that a candidate spend some time working in a nuclear medicine department before matriculation. This would help to eliminate the malcontents who will never find the perfect job.

For the rest, nuclear medicine is challenging enough intellectually and satisfying enough to one's humanitarian instincts to keep the dedicated NMT working in this field as long as he is able.

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