

NUMBER OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS DECREASING

Nuclear medicine technology is among 23 allied health professions witnessing changes in the numbers of their educational programs. The Division of Allied Health Education and Accreditation (AHEA) of the American Medical Association (AMA) has examined voluntary withdrawal of accreditation from the Committee on AHEA's programs between 1983 and 1987 (1). Reasons for withdrawal and their relative importance were elicited by means of a questionnaire sent to the directors of 432 programs that requested withdrawal of accreditation during the survey period. The survey, which had a 90% response rate, indicated:

- From 1983 to 1987 there was a net loss of 112 of 3069 (3.65%) accredited programs.
- In December 1986, when the survey was completed, the number of nuclear medicine technology programs was down to 128 from 141 in 1983. By June 1987 this figure had decreased to 117, according to the Technologist Section of The Society of Nuclear Medicine.
- The most programs, in absolute numbers, were discontinued in medical technology (116), radiography (103), and respiratory therapy technology (29). Blood banking, medical laboratory technology (certificate), cytotechnology, and medical technology reported the greatest decreases.
- No programs for ophthalmic medical assistant, EMT-

paramedics, occupational therapists, or surgical assistants requested withdrawal of accreditation.

- Nearly 70% of all discontinuing programs were hospital based.
- Institutional or program budget restrictions, lack of need within the immediate geographic area, declining enrollment, and a declining applicant pool were the most important reasons for discontinuing nuclear medicine technology programs.
- In medical technology and radiology the Medicare prospective payment system (PPS) was a major factor in program discontinuation.

The reasons for program discontinuation are not independent, reports the AHEA. Trends in nuclear medicine technology programs are thus likely to reflect those in other allied health professions. Particularly in occupations with significant decreases, reasons for discontinuation are interactive; for example, budget restrictions, prospective reimbursement, and lack of local need act together to weaken a program's financial viability.

Betsy Hanson

Reference

1. American Medical Association Division of Allied Health Education and Accreditation. Voluntary withdrawals of accreditation 1983-1987. *Allied Health Education Newsletter* 1987;18(3):2.