

NMTCB Report

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In 1988, a total of 602 candidates took the NMTCB certification examination. The exam was offered in June and September at a total of 78 test sites in the United States and Puerto Rico. Data regarding the two examinations are as follows:

	June 1988	September 1988	Total
Pass	166	255	421
Fail	66	115	181
Total	232	370	602

These data reflect the current trend of decreasing qualified examinees taking the NMTCB examination. Over the past six years, there has been a 35.6% drop in examinees, from 935 in 1983 to 602 in 1988. The number of candidates passing the exam each year peaked in 1985 with 681 applicants passing. However, this figure has dropped to 421 in 1988, a 38% decrease (Table 1). Has this decrease resulted in a critical shortage of certified nuclear medicine technologists to practice in a field that is increasing in productivity and sophistication of instrumentation procedures?

The Summit on Manpower data have determined that there is definitely a manpower shortage in nuclear medicine technology. The Summit research further indicates that "in hospitals throughout the country there is a position vacancy rate ranging from 3% to 13% in nuclear medicine technology" (1).

If the number of candidates with alternate eligibility requirements taking the NMTCB exam are not considered in Table 2, there is a 31% drop in CAHEA-trained examinees over the past six years. There was a peak in 1985 with 746 ex-

aminees (Table 2). Consequently, this decrease in CAHEA-trained examinees leads to a decrease in the number of certified nuclear medicine technologists qualified to practice.

In 1976, there were 90 CAHEA-accredited schools in nuclear medicine technology. This number peaked in 1984 with 143 schools and corresponds with the peak number of CAHEA graduates taking the NMTCB exam in 1985. As of February 1989, there were only 113 CAHEA-approved programs, representing a 27% decrease in four years (2). There have been a variety of reasons reported for the declining

TABLE 1. Examinees Taking the NMTCB Exam

	No. of Examinees	No. Passing
1983	935	563
1984	947	524
1985	929	681
1986	719	577
1987	617	447
1988	602	421

TABLE 2. CAHEA Versus Alternate Eligibility

	CAHEA	Alternate Eligibility
1983	723	210
1984	711	235
1985	746	183
1986	601	118
1987	504	113
1988	501	101

numbers in training programs, particularly those that are hospital-based, from 1985 to 1988: lack of employment opportunities for graduates (the major reason cited in 1985); hospital budget cuts due to the Prospective Payment Systems; and a declining applicant pool.

The decrease in CAHEA-trained applicants for the NMTCB examination is not, however, related solely to the closures of training programs. The 1988 NMTCB annual survey of CAHEA-accredited nuclear medicine training program shows an average nationwide student enrollment capacity per program of 59.2%. This number compares with data from the DAHEA survey of 59% enrollment for 1987 (3).

The number of qualified graduates entering the field is decreasing. Manpower shortages will not be eliminated in the near future by prospective graduates taking the NMTCB examination. The survival and growth of nuclear medicine technology depends upon the availability of qualified technologists. The Summit on Manpower will hopefully lead the way to increasing recruitment efforts and implement strategies to reverse the current trends. The NMTCB, as a member of the Summit on Manpower, is committed to working with the other 16 professional organizations to alleviate the current manpower crisis in nuclear medicine technology and solicits the support and assistance of the 10,611 technologists it certifies.

References

1. Summit on Manpower. *J Nucl Med Technol* 1989;17:48-49.
2. Summit on Manpower. *Report of the Focus Group on Data*. American Healthcare Radiology Administrators: in press
3. Emphasis on recruitment to alleviate manpower shortages. *J Nucl Med Technol* 1989;17:49-50.