

MY PERSONAL
OPINIONDo We Need More Than One
Certification Board?

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As a former member of the Board of Directors of the Nuclear Medicine Technology Certification Board (NMTCB), I never thought that I would be the one asking this question. I can still recall that June day in Dallas, Texas in 1976 when The Society of Nuclear Medicine, Inc. approved and allocated the initial funds required to establish a national certification examination in nuclear medicine technology. This examination was to be developed and administered by nuclear medicine technologists.

Prior to the establishment of the NMTCB, there were two agencies credentialing nuclear medicine technologists, The American Registry of Radiological Technologists (ARRT) and the American Society of Clinical Pathologists (ASCP). Neither of these examinations were reflective of the practice of nuclear medicine technology and, furthermore, neither board represented the profession. With the incorporation of the NMTCB in 1977 and the administration of the first examination on September 15, 1978, a new board entered the certification arena. At last we, as practicing nuclear medicine technologists, had an identity. We finally had a certification board that truly represented our profession. However, it created quite a dilemma for graduating students, who often asked me: "Which examination should I take? The NMTCB, the ARRT, or the ASCP?" My answer has always been to promote the NMTCB. Within a few short years, this choice was narrowed down to two; the NMTCB or the ARRT, as a result of the merging of the ASCP with the NMTCB. As I understand it, negotiations with the ARRT have come to a complete standstill, and it becomes quite apparent as to why. Why should the ARRT even consider such a merger when every so many years, the NMTCB recognizes ARRT certification?

The main reason that we as nuclear medicine technologists fought so hard for the creation of our own certification board was to establish our own professional identity. In fact, the NMTCB states that the main reason for the establishment of the board was to gain a sense of identity (*1*). Another key reason was "the need to have an examination which truly reflected both current practice and the entire scope of practice for nuclear medicine technology." Charged to satisfy these two professional needs, the NMTCB was founded and dedicated to the development and administration of a certification examination. Recognizing the need for professional psychometric expertise, the NMTCB contracted with the American College Testing Program for examination and administration services. Based on their recommendations and other information, the NMTCB committed itself to the goal of developing a "competency-based, criterion-referenced certification examination" (*1*). The NMTCB has achieved these goals.

After accomplishing so much, how then can the NMTCB Board of Directors turn their backs upon the original principles for the establishment of the board? Why did the board re-open recognition of prior certification by other boards? This had been done by the board when it was initially founded, however, it was to be a one-time only event. In fact, during my tenure with the board, applications for recognition of prior certification received after the established deadline were rejected. Does the NMTCB need money that desperately? If so, then why not appeal to the membership for donations? In order to obtain answers to these questions, I contacted Karen Blondeau, CNMT, Chairperson of the NMTCB. Ms. Blondeau informed me that the NMTCB had received many requests from ARRT-certified nuclear medicine technologists asking for a method to obtain NMTCB certification. I was informed that first of all this was not being done for monetary gain, but to provide a service to these individuals. I then asked why the Board felt any need to provide a service to non-CNMTs? I was told that the Board felt that the ARRT certification examination was reflective of entry-level status, and the decision was made to recognize prior certification for a one-year period (1/1/90 to 12/31/90). I pointed out to her that these individuals certified by the ARRT prior to 1985 had plenty of time to take the NMTCB examination and that they either opted not to, or did not pass the NMTCB examination. I then asked why didn't the NMTCB simply let these individuals take the written examination and obtain the title

CNMT by examination? The chairman responded that this was not solely her decision and that reopening recognition of prior certification was a decision made by the entire Board with the approval of the NMTCB Advisory Council as well.

The Advisory Council of the NMTCB is composed of representatives appointed by sponsoring professional organizations most notably, The Society of Nuclear Medicine, Inc., the Technologist Section—The Society of Nuclear Medicine, Inc., and the American College of Nuclear Physicians. I have but one thing that I would like to say to the members of the Board and the Advisory Council: "Shame on you!" You are supposed to be the watch dogs guarding our interests and ensuring that our professional standards are maintained. How could a group of professionals such as the Board and the Advisory Council serve to negate the value of the title of CNMT? You may be asking yourselves how did we negate the value of CNMT? I respond by asking you, did you have the insight to at least cross-reference all applications for recognition of prior certification against the NMTCB's own files so as to not award the title of CNMT to individuals who were unable to pass the NMTCB examination? The answer to this question, shockingly enough, is a resounding NO. To me, this is totally unacceptable and has placed me in a position where I seriously have to consider applying for reactivation of my ARRT credentials, since you seem to feel that the ARRT examination is a more valid examination. If you feel that my statement is not correct, then why were applications not cross-referenced? Would you consider publishing a scientific article without cross-referencing? I would hope not.

I do not stand alone on these issues (2,3) and, in fact, I totally support our colleagues in Canada on this issue. I was fortunate to have been on the NMTCB's Board of Directors when the NMTCB and the Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists (CAMRT) met and reviewed each organization's certification examinations to establish international reciprocity, which was achieved. The NMTCB is the only nuclear medicine technologist certification board in the United States to have achieved this status. The CAMRT did, however, place one stipulation upon the reciprocity agreement. The CAMRT will only award their title to CNMTs who received their title by passing the NMTCB's written examination thereby eliminating recognition of prior certified CNMTs from the reciprocity agreement. I commend them.

I must also ask where was the leadership of the sponsoring organizations who appointed members to the Advisory Council of the NMTCB? Did you also approve of this? Had you given any direction to or asked for any feedback from your appointees? If not, then why not?

Now is the time for the NMTCB Board, its Advisory Council, and the sponsoring organizations of the NMTCB to actively pursue and apply whatever pressure is necessary to eliminate this problem of two national certification agencies in the United States. Vincent Cherico, CNMT, in an editorial, asked that all technologists who hold dual certification by the NMTCB and the ARRT contact both organizations and express their feelings in regard to the dual certification issue (4). I strongly support Mr. Cherico's closing statement in his editorial, "May I loudly say to the Board of Directors of the NMTCB and the ARRT—let's get with it in the 90s."

REFERENCES

1. Certification Examination Application and Instructions for 1990-1992. The Nuclear Medicine Technology Certification Board, Inc.
2. *RT Image Forum*. June 25, 1990.
3. *RT Image Forum*. Aug. 20, 1990, p. 17.
4. Letter from the Editor. *Greater New York Chapter, Journal of Nuclear Medicine Technology*.