

## NMTCB REPORT

**Miriam Miller, CNMT, Chair**

**T**here has been much talk in today's health care milieu regarding competency. The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) requires demonstration of evaluation of continued competency of nuclear medicine technologists. Everyone agrees that this is a difficult task to accomplish. Either you are competent or not, but how do we test for this?

Competency has come under much discussion by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in setting standards for mammography laboratory accreditation. The FDA currently requires 40 hours of training documented by the program director. If a technologist has passed the advanced certification this counts for the 40 hours of training. The important point is that competency does not stop there. In the future, it may become necessary to document the performance of a given number of procedures within a specific time period to demonstrate competency. The idea of recertification examination also is being considered. It will not be too long in the future when the accreditation of nuclear medicine laboratories will be a fact of life. How will you demonstrate your continued competency?

Many people have asked the Nuclear Medicine Technology Certification Board (NMTCB) why we do not make continuing education credits (CEs) mandatory. I'd like to clarify the board's thinking regarding continuing education versus recertification. The board currently feels that the accumulation of CEs does not necessarily demonstrate competency. A state licensing agency may require CEs in order to renew a license and this is legitimate. But can the NMTCB take away your certification because you have not acquired a specific number of CEs?

As an example, I am a radiologic technologist and passed the ARRT examination in 1950. I thought about dropping the RT(R) because, during



the years after 1961, I was trained and worked exclusively in nuclear medicine. I maintained it, however, because I worked in a "license-required" state as an administrator over radiology and nuclear medicine. I have not actually taken a radiograph since 1961 but have attended CE-approved lectures and have maintained my 12 CEs per year as required. Would you consider me a competent radiographer? I don't, but the ARRT does.

The NMTCB board feels that taking a recertification examination would better demonstrate continued competency. This does not mean you will lose your initial certification if you fail, but when you pass you will receive an updated certificate. Your certificate will say 1997 instead of 1978 (or the year you were initially certified) and will show that you are still competent. The recertification examination will still be entry level but will be entry level in what is being done in nuclear medicine laboratories in 1997, not in 1978. The NMTCB also is considering advanced practice examinations in specialized areas in the future.

Many technologists think, "There is no way I want to take another certification examination." Why not? Do you think that you are not competent? Of course not! Remember the exami-

nation is based on tasks performed every day in a regular nuclear medicine department. Sure, you will need to do a little boning up. This is where your continuing education lectures will serve you well. The NMTCB does not deny the value of CEs but says that merely acquiring CEs does not demonstrate competency.

With the advent of computer adaptive testing (CAT) by the NMTCB, you may take the examination on any day, Monday through Friday, at a computer center in your area. Once the NMTCB office has notified you of your eligibility, you may make the appointment at your convenience. The test takes approximately two hours and you will receive your results immediately upon completion of the examination. No one but you will know these results, or even if you have taken the examination.

The 44th Annual Meeting of the Society of Nuclear Medicine will be held in San Antonio, TX on June 1-4. I hope you will be able to attend. On Tuesday, June 3, from 8:00 to 9:30 am, Pat Wells will give an update on CAT over the past year. This will give you an overview of how the NMTCB keeps the examination current as the clinical practice changes. It will also help students, or those interested in recertification, review and prepare for the NMTCB examination.

Following this presentation on June 3, from 9:45 to 11:15 am, Nancy Sawyer will lead the educator's forum on testing psychometrics. This presentation will explain the standards used to confirm that the examination is testing the knowledge necessary for entry-level technologists.

You are invited to attend the Item Writers Workshop on Wednesday, June 4, from 8:00 am to 3:45 pm. We hope to see many new faces who would like to become item writers.

If you are unable to attend any of the above sessions, you are invited to visit the NMTCB booth in the exhibit area and talk to Dr. Jim Greene and other members of the board who are available. We would like to meet you and hear your concerns.