

# Message from the Chair

**Jonathan E. McConathy, MD, PhD** - Chair, American Board of Nuclear Medicine

Dear ABNM Diplomates:

I hope that you and your family are well as you read this message. Most if not all of you are dealing with the professional and personal disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. While ABNM-related issues may not be your top priority at the moment, be assured that our board members and ABNM staff are committed to providing continued service to our current and future diplomates. Our staff members are working remotely to ensure social distancing but remain available by phone and email to answer questions and concerns you may have. We will be communicating key information to you regarding the impact of COVID-19 on Nuclear Medicine programs, trainees and diplomates as the situation evolves. We recognize that trainees will likely be affected by illness, quarantine and work limitations at their institutions, and the ABNM recently made a one-time modification to our policy to allow an additional two weeks of leave for trainee absences related to COVID-19. We will work with individual residents and diplomates to mitigate the impact based on individual circumstances that may interfere with the normal course of training and testing.

Amid these unusual circumstances, the ABNM continues in its mission to assure that Nuclear Medicine physicians are equipped to deliver high quality diagnostic studies and therapies to our patients. I recently assumed the position of Chair of the ABNM following the outstanding leadership provided by Joanna Fair. As the Director of Molecular Imaging and Therapeutics at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, I am actively involved in clinical nuclear medicine as well as translational research. I joined the ABNM in 2016, and one of the real privileges of serving on the board is working closely with a team of people committed to advancing Nuclear Medicine. Our board members work on a voluntary basis along with our small staff and our part-time Executive and Associate Executive Directors. Throughout the year, we write and refine questions, develop our examinations, review credentialing applications, communicate with diplomates, and address issues that affect the field.

Over the next year, the ABNM has several specific priorities. This summer, we will assess the results and feedback from the CertLink® longitudinal examination pilot program for Maintenance of Certification (MOC). We plan to make a decision regarding the permanent implementation of Certlink as well as formulate a long term plan for the traditional MOC examination. Input from our diplomates,

both positive and negative, has been very useful to the Board in terms of refining the content and format of Certlink questions. We currently have 922 diplomates participating in Certlink for MOC as well as 120 trainees answering Certlink questions for educational purposes.

We also plan to transition the ABNM examination question database to a modern electronic format this year. The Board has evaluated several software platforms and have identified options that will streamline question writing, examination construction, and curating the overall question pool content and quality. These platforms would also allow us to deliver the In-Training Exam (ITE) electronically with improved image quality and simpler logistics for training programs compared to the current paper version. While the question database is behind-the-scenes for those not on the ABNM, it is critical for providing valid and high-quality testing for certification and MOC.

Lastly, the open application process for new Board members will continue based on last year's success. We believe this open process will help the ABNM maintain a diverse membership in terms of type of practice, geographical location and demographics that reflects our diplomates and Nuclear Medicine trainees. We received 30 applications for four open Board positions, and the vast majority of applicants were well-qualified for service on the Board. The Board will be sending out a call for applications in April, and we encourage both new and previous applicants to consider applying.

In closing, we remain committed to high quality training in Nuclear Medicine. We will work with our trainees and diplomates to navigate the difficulties posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite this current challenge, the increasing interest in theranostics, recent FDA approvals of new radiopharmaceuticals, and the recent increase in trainees taking and passing the ABNM certifying examination bode well for the long term strength of our field. I am honored to serve as the Chair of the ABNM and look forward to working with my colleagues to support our diplomates and Nuclear Medicine.

Sincerely

  
**Jonathan E. McConathy, MD, PhD**