



# TRACERS

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## **Newsline: ABNM Diplomate Workforce**

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## ABNM Diplomate Workforce

The American Board of Nuclear Medicine (ABNM) has certified 5,527 physicians since 1972. Forty percent of diplomates were certified between 1972 and 1976, when physicians in practice could be certified. After 1977, the number of physicians certified each year has remained remarkably constant, at approximately 74 per year (1). Since 2006, the ABNM has been collecting self-reported data on the current work experience of diplomates (total number of hours worked per week and percentage of hours doing nuclear medicine) and the percent effort in general nuclear medicine, cardiovascular nuclear medicine, therapy, and PET/CT. Twenty-five percent of diplomates have entered these data (time-limited 62%, lifetime 8%). Some diplomates, especially lifetime diplomates, are no longer actively practicing. Thus, the data largely represent diplomates participating in maintenance of certification (MOC) activities and are more representative of time-limited than lifetime diplomates.

The ABNM MOC exam tests the full scope of nuclear medicine practice. The median percent effort of the workforce is an important factor in determining the exam blueprint; however, practice patterns vary. Five percent effort or less is reported by 12% of diplomates for general nuclear medicine, 33% for cardiovascular nuclear medicine, 26% for PET/CT, and 67% for therapy. No effort is reported by 10% of diplomates for general nuclear medicine, 22% for cardiovascular nuclear medicine, 21% for PET/CT, and 26% for therapy. Ninety-five percent or more effort in a single area is reported by only 4% of diplomates for general nuclear medicine, 1% for cardiovascular nuclear medicine, 2% for PET/CT, and less than 1% for therapy. A modular exam that allows physicians to choose questions based on practice relevance would be optimal but is not practical given the relatively small number of ABNM diplomates.

Fifty-two percent of ABNM diplomates are also certified by the American Board of Radiology (ABR). Figure 1 shows box plots of diplomate practice profile data. The median number of hours that ABNM diplomates work per week is 45, with half working between 40 and 50 hours per week. The median is higher (50 hours per week) for physicians also certified by ABR, with half working between 40 and 50 hours, the same as non-ABR



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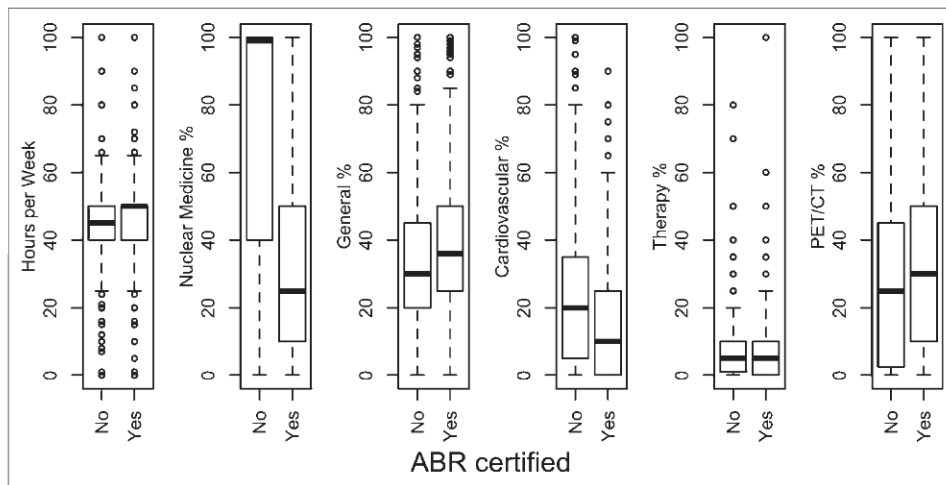
diplomates. As expected, the majority of diplomates without ABR certification are completely dedicated to nuclear medicine (median 100%, half greater than 40%). ABR diplomates' median effort in nuclear medicine is 25% (half between 10% and 50%); only 2% are completely dedicated to nuclear medicine.

ABR diplomates have a slightly lower effort in cardiovascular imaging, with slightly more in general nuclear medicine and PET/CT. Nine percent of ABR certified diplomates and 12% of non-ABR-certified diplomates do not do any PET/CT. Overall the distributions are quite similar. The ABNM MOC program is tailored to meet the needs of a varied workforce, including keeping knowledge current in focused practice areas, as well as enhancing knowledge in nuclear medicine and molecular imaging areas outside current practice.

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### REFERENCE

1. Royal HD. The ABNM: past, present, and future. *J Nucl Med.* 2014;55:11N-13N.



**FIGURE 1.** The first 2 groups of boxplots show self-reported work hours per week and percent dedicated to nuclear medicine. Of the nuclear medicine effort the last 4 groups show the percentages in general nuclear medicine, cardiovascular nuclear medicine, therapy, and PET/CT. For each group, the first boxplot shows data for non-ABR-certified diplomates and the second is for diplomates also certified by the ABR.