

# Executive Director's Message

## ABNM Certification Trends 1977-2019

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The ABNM was incorporated in 1991. The first certification examination was given in 1972. There were no ACGME accredited nuclear medicine training programs when the board was founded. For the first five years, physicians could take the examination if they were certified by one of the founding specialty boards (radiology, internal medicine, pathology) and met other requirements. Training in an ACGME certified nuclear medicine program became a requirement in 1977. The length of nuclear medicine residency training was initially two years. The average number of candidates taking the examination from 1977-2007 was 105. The average number of candidates who passed the examination was 74 (see graph below). In 2007, the length of training was increased to three years. After the length of training was increased, the number candidates taking and passing the examination declined to 88 and 70, respectively, for the years 2008-2015. During the same period of time, the number of accredited nuclear medicine residency programs declined from 56 to 43, and the number of residents in training declined from 149 to 93. The increase in the length of training had an adverse impact on the number of physicians entering nuclear

medicine residency programs that was not anticipated. The decline continued in recent years due to changes in healthcare and the poor job market for nuclear medicine physicians who were not also certified in radiology. The nadir was reached in 2016. Since that time, however, the numbers of physicians in nuclear medicine training programs has increased, and the number of physicians certified by the ABNM has also increased. This positive trend is partly due to the new integrated training pathways in nuclear medicine and radiology that allow physicians to complete training required for both specialties in 4-5 years. The increase is also due to the development of new radiopharmaceuticals for diagnosis and treatment that has made nuclear medicine training more appealing to young professionals. Based on the number of submitted applications, the ABNM expects 70 candidates for the 2019 certification examination, compared to 54 candidates in 2016, an increase of 32%. The ABNM sees a bright future for nuclear medicine, and is working to ensure that nuclear medicine physicians are prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities in a rapidly changing field.

