



## SNMMI Newsline:

### Nuclear Medicine, Social Media and Two Degrees of Separation

*George M. Segall, M.D., Executive Director*

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The American Board of Nuclear Medicine (ABNM) is one of the smaller boards among the 24 member boards of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS). The ABNM has certified 5,600 physicians since the first certification examination in 1972 and currently has more than 4,700 active diplomates. Approximately 60–80 new diplomates are certified each year, a steady number for the last 4 decades. In comparison, the 3 largest medical boards have each certified more than 100,000 physicians and collectively account for approximately half of the nearly 1 million physicians certified by ABMS member boards.

One of the unique attributes of our small medical and scientific community is the personal connection we have with one another. Six degrees of separation is a theory postulated by Hungarian author Frigyes Karinthy in 1929, asserting that everyone can be connected to any other individual through no more than 5 people. World population was estimated to be 2 billion people in 1927.

How closely are we connected with one another in our medical and scientific community? To help answer that question, I asked 2 colleagues to separately identify 10 individuals who have advanced nuclear medicine. The list included physicians as well as scientists in the United States and abroad. Four individuals were included in both lists, for a total of 16 luminaries. I wrote to each of these 16 individuals and asked him or her to indicate those on the list with whom they had a professional connection, including a minimum of 1 face-to-face conversation or meeting. I received answers from 12 individuals, who indicated they had a direct professional connection (0 degrees of separation) with a remarkable average of 70% of the other individuals on the list (range 33%–100%). Based on this admittedly nonscientific survey, one could reasonably estimate that we are all professionally connected to one another with no more than 2 degrees of separation.

The nuclear medicine community in the United States has 1 leading professional society, SNMMI, in addition to several other professional organizations that significantly contribute to education and research. SNMMI membership in 2015 is more than 18,000, including more than 14,000 technologists, 2,622 physicians, and 885 scientists and pharmacists. A large number of nuclear medicine professionals attend the annual meeting, which provides an opportunity for making new professional connections. Approximately 1,739 physician members (66%) attended at least 1 annual meeting from 2011 to 2015.

Digital social networks are becoming a large part of everyday life as a result of convenience and universal connection to the Internet. The ABNM made its debut on social media in September 2014. You can find us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/americanboardofnuclearmedicine>, on Twitter @ABNM or <https://twitter.com/ABNM>, or you can search ABNM on either site. Both sites contain important dates and updates regarding examinations, as well as other useful information. Social media allows the ABNM to share information with diplomates between semiannual newsletters and, more important, allows individuals to communicate with one another as well as with the board.

Our professional connections are the bedrock of the nuclear medicine community. The personal and digital network that we have created is a tangible asset that helps us advance professionally and scientifically. Many challenges and opportunities lie ahead. We will meet them together.



George Segall, MD