Message From the Chair

The ABNMarium at ABNM Chair issues quickly. I must say that it was gratifying to read
about the efforts to improve the ABNM’s website and to enhance the diplomate experience.

Dr. Leonie Gordon Honored at 2019 SNMMI Annual Meeting

Leonie Gordon, MD, FACR, FACNM, Dean of Nuclear Medicine (ABNM) and Professor of Radiology, Georgia Institute of Technology, has been honored by the Society of Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging (SNMMI) for her contributions to nuclear medicine. Dr. Gordon, who is also the Chair of the Communications Committee, was presented with the 2019 SNMMI Annual Meeting Excellence in Leadership Award.

How I Became Interested in Nuclear Medicine

Naomi Alazraki, MD

I started my radiology residency at the University of California, San Diego, in 1984. My interest in nuclear medicine was sparked by a lecture given by Dr. George Segall, who was the Chair of the Department of Radiology at the time. He presented a case study involving the use of nuclear medicine to diagnose a rare disease, which fascinated me.

Diversity Among Board Members

The ABNM continually strives for diversity among its board members, recognizing that diversity extends beyond the issues of race, gender, and ethnicity. The ABNM promotes a culture of inclusion and values the perspectives and experiences that diverse members bring to the board.

Communications Committee Chair Message

George M. Segall, MD

The Communications Committee is working to improve the ABNM’s website and to enhance the diplomate experience. I encourage all members to provide feedback on how we can better communicate with each other.

DID YOU KNOW?

Your ABNM profile and your CEnLink profile are on TELUS separate platforms.

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- Access to your CEnLink profile is located at https://www.cenlink.org/login
- ARE YOU currently participating in CEnLink? Access your CEnLink profile at https://www.cenlink.org/login

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Message from the Chair

Joanna R. Fair, MD, PhD – Chair, American Board of Nuclear Medicine

Dear ABNM Diplomates:

As my year as ABNM chair moves quickly, I have become increasingly excited about the future of Nuclear Medicine.

At our last meeting, we selected 4 new ABNM board members, who will join us for our Winter meeting and become full board members immediately afterwards. We opened the application process to all ABNM diplomates this year, and we were very excited to see the number of high-quality applications we received. We are pleased that two of our incoming members are from private practice, expanding the diverse backgrounds of our board.

We continue to focus on our CertLink® longitudinal exam for MOC, which provides diplomates and the Board with both summative and formative information. We strive to include ‘bread-and-butter’ Nuclear Medicine topics as well as introduce developing imaging and therapeutic techniques. We have encouraged trainees to participate at no cost so that they can become comfortable with the system prior to taking the examination as a diplomate. We likewise appreciate the feedback diplomates have provided to us on questions, and we continually work to improve this examination to provide more value to you.

Likewise, we continue to investigate a new examination database, which will help us manage our question pools for all our examinations – CertLink, certification, maintenance of certification, and in-training examinations. We are seeking a replacement that would allow us to deliver the ITE electronically, which will simplify the delivery to training programs.

This is a time of growth for Nuclear Medicine, with FDA approval of thera(g)nostic agents for diagnosis and treatment neuroendocrine tumors, and more like $^{68}$Ga/$^{177}$Lu-PSMA agents in the pipeline. I strongly encourage those of you who work with medical students and residents to share these exciting developments with your learners, along with your excitement about our specialty. The future is bright for Nuclear Medicine, and we anticipate the demand for competent Nuclear Medicine practitioners will grow.

Warmly,

Joanna R. Fair, MD, PhD
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 of 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.
My very first rotation of my radiology residency was nuclear medicine.

I started my radiology residency at University of California, San Diego, in July, 1968. The medical school was brand new; the new chairman of Radiology, Elliot Lasser, had just arrived at UCSD at the same time that I started in the residency program. The new radiology faculty consisted of 3 young attendings who the new chairman brought with him from University of Pittsburgh and 2 others, one of whom was Bill Ashburn, who had just finished 6 years in the public health service at the NIH. Bill had completed radiology residency at the NIH, and later ran nuclear medicine there. He accepted the position as head of the new UCSD division of nuclear medicine.

I liked nuclear medicine, including the following: the challenges and complexities of the imaging, the quantitative nature of everything done in nuclear medicine, the fact that referring physicians seemed not to have the slightest inkling about nuclear medicine and needed everything we did and found explained to them. When I presented a finding from a nuclear medicine study at a conference, I found that the audience would be attentive and amazed to learn what the nuclear medicine study showed and how the procedure worked. Everything about nuclear medicine was new to everyone. We were imaging physiology and pathophysiology and had the ability to image sequentially over time. This was groundbreaking stuff!

About a year later, Bill asked me if I would like to do a year in nuclear medicine. My thought when I decided to do radiology residency was that I would ultimately become a pediatric radiologist. But, there was no pediatric radiology fellowship possibility in San Diego; commuting to Los Angeles was not feasible for me at that time. So, although I liked nuclear medicine, I never thought of myself as particularly talented in mathematics, physics or chemistry. How would I manage in nuclear medicine, a field which, to my mind, depends on those sciences? Bill Ashburn assured me that the clinical component of nuclear medicine was the dominant aspect of nuclear medicine and I was quite knowledgeable in that area and that’s what mattered most. I believed him. Indeed, I found that I could learn the physics and chemistry that I needed to a level sufficient for functioning well in clinical nuclear medicine. I am grateful to Bill for having recruited me into nuclear medicine.

Another important aspect of nuclear medicine that I particularly liked was the patient interaction. Primarily for therapy procedures, I found the patient interactions very rewarding. Patients were generally grateful for the simplicity of the therapy and the anticipated resulting relief.

Forty-nine years later, retired after a 44 year career in nuclear medicine, I find myself still interested in keeping in contact with the field, attending some meetings and even participating in some authoring. One more big bonus (my thinking): the nicest people in medicine are in pediatrics and nuclear medicine.
ABNM recognizes that diversity extends well beyond the issues of age, gender, language and race. We realize that our board should represent the demographics of our diplomates and our workforce. We do know that this can vary and change over time. We also know that there is compelling evidence that diversity yields immense benefit for the board and its diplomates. Without a diverse board, ABNM may not reach its full potential. ABNM has made a conscious effort to increase the board diversity and recently assessed certain characteristics of board members and diplomates which we thought were important and shown in the table below.

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<tr>
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<th>DIPLOMATES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>42%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>81%</td>
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<td>ABNM Only</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>42%</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABNM + ABR</td>
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<td>ABNM + Others (Not ABR)</td>
<td>18%</td>
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Overall our board reflects diversity amongst its board members that, in the most part mirrors our diplomates. We do recognize that the demographics of ABNM certified physicians is changing and we strive to reflect this in our board composition. We will continue to look at this and make sure our board represents our diplomates and reflects diversity and important attitudes and identities.

It is an exciting time for the practice of nuclear medicine with the evolution of thera(g)nostic and new PET tracer agents. We continue to invest time and energy into new developments in our fields and make sure that we have a diverse board that is invested in these new developments and help us develop testing that reflects these.

Leonie Gordon, MD

Message From the Associate Executive Director

Diversity Among Board Members

Leonie Gordon, MD – Associate Executive Director, American Board of Nuclear Medicine
Communications Committee Chair Message

Esma Akin, MD, FACR – Communications Committee Chair, American Board of Nuclear Medicine

Dear Diplomate,

The ABNM continually strives for effective and timely communication to keep you informed of our efforts in order to best serve you and to respond to your concerns and questions regarding your certification and maintenance of certification (MOC) needs in our rapidly evolving field.

We aim to achieve this by means of various diplomate surveys, reminders for approaching deadlines in certification and maintenance of certification timelines via regular emails, as well as our social media presence (Facebook [https://www.facebook.com/americanboardofnuclearmedicine/], LinkedIn [https://www.linkedin.com/company/american-board-of-nuclear-medicine/], and Twitter [https://twitter.com/ABNM]).

In the new era of MOC via the online longitudinal assessment, CertLink®, which is now in full effect and takes the place of a secure MOC exam, the emails we send our diplomates, our TRACERS newsletter and our social media announcements carry even greater weight and importance. Many of us may opt out of receiving regular emails due to the heavy load already existing in our inboxes.

Allow us to ask you to permit these communications to avoid missing deadlines for CertLink and any additional ABNM important information. Your feedback regarding the new platform as well as your questions and concerns are of paramount importance to the ABNM and allow us to be effective and transparent in addition to delivering value. We aim to capture this valuable feedback from you in the form of surveys sent to you as well as via email questionnaires. Live help from our staff regarding CertLink is also available for you both online and via phone call at our offices from ABNM staff.

Effective and smooth communication will continue to be our main objective to ensure a seamless transition to CertLink, both today and for future ABNM diplomates. Please do not hesitate to contact us at abnm@abnm.org with questions, suggestions and your valuable feedback.

Esma Akin, MD, FACR
The ABNM Examination Committee looks forward to another exciting year ahead. Seventy candidates are enrolled for the 2019 ABNM Certification Examination, which will take place October 7 through October 12. This represents a 25% increase in enrollment from the previous year, when 56 candidates took the Certifying Examination and achieved a pass rate of 79%.

The ABNM Maintenance of Certification Examination continues to be offered to diplomates who wish to take a secure examination every 10 years, in lieu of participating in the CertLink® longitudinal assessment pilot program. CertLink periodically delivers nuclear medicine questions with detailed explanations and references directly to ABNM diplomates. Fourteen diplomates are currently enrolled for the 2019 Maintenance of Certification Examination, decreased from 17 candidates in the previous year. As of July 2019, the number of CertLink enrollees was 895 (including both time-limited and lifetime certificate holders), representing a 67% increase from 536 enrollees in July 2018.

The ABNM offers an In-Training Examination, which is a paper-based, image-rich, multiple choice exam taken by Nuclear Medicine residents during each year of training. It tests basic information necessary to learn the principles of nuclear medicine and to become a lifelong learner. Program enrollment for the 2020 In-Training Examination is now open. The ABNM is also offering residents and fellows an opportunity to participate in CertLink In-Training without charge, from January 1 – December 31, 2019. We hope that this exciting offering will engage Nuclear Medicine trainees in the experience of longitudinal assessment, in addition to providing an additional valuable resource in their education and preparation for the ABNM Certification Examination.

Behind the scenes, the ABNM Exam Committee is working hard on implementation of a much-needed, cost-conscious upgrade of our question banking software. This upgrade will enable the ABNM to better evaluate and improve the quality of our exam questions and CertLink questions, and to respond even more effectively to feedback from diplomates and trainees. The ABNM hopes to convert the In-Training Examination from a paper-based to computer-based format in time for the 2021 examination dates.

We wish all of our 2019-2020 ABNM Examination Candidates best of luck, and please do not hesitate to reach out to us with any questions or concerns.
Leonie Gordon, MD, FACP, FACNM, FSNMMI, ABNM Associate Executive Director, was honored at the 2019 SNMMI Annual Meeting in Anaheim, CA on June 25, 2019 by Satoshi Minoshima, MD, PhD, SNMMI President, who presented her with the Presidential Distinguished Educator Award. The annual award is given to an individual for dedication to the education of practicing physicians, residents and fellows, medical students, and other professionals. Dr. Gordon is also the recipient of the 2015 SNMMI Academic Council Lifetime Achievement in Education Award.

Dr. Gordon is Professor with Tenure and Associate Dean for Graduate Education and Faculty Development at the Medical University of South Carolina. She is the Vice Chair of Education in the Department of Radiology.

As ABNM Associate Executive Director, Dr. Gordon is responsible for the Maintenance of Certification program, including CertLink. CertLink is a longitudinal assessment program which was introduced in 2018. Dr. Gordon helped develop CertLink for ABNM diplomates. Based on adult learning theory, CertLink periodically delivers questions and explanations that provide repeated exposure to relevant information as a way to test and expand knowledge.

The ABNM congratulates Dr. Gordon on the well-deserved SNMMI award, and thanks her for her outstanding work on the board.