Nuclear medicine is the medical specialty with the most international medical school graduates. In 2021, international medical school graduates accounted for 82% of nuclear medicine residents, up from 59% in 2011. The ABNM wants to understand why so few US medical students pursue training in nuclear medicine. To identify the US medical schools providing the fewest nuclear medicine residents, the ABNM looked at applications for the certification examination over a 5-year period from 2018-2022.

Thirty-three percent of the 36 ACGME accredited nuclear medicine programs did not have any medical students from their affiliated universities matriculate into any nuclear medicine program in the United States. Another 36% percent had only 1 student matriculate into a Nuclear Medicine program during the same period.

The medical schools with the most graduates entering nuclear medicine training were Indiana University with 7 graduates, followed by Harvard medical school with 5 graduates. The medical schools at Duke and Vanderbilt universities each had 4 graduates entering nuclear medicine training. The ABNM also looked at medical schools with nuclear radiology programs and found that Case Western Reserve University had 4 medical students enter nuclear medicine training programs.

The ABNM will be reaching out to the nuclear medicines and nuclear radiology program directors at these medical schools to learn what they are doing to interest medical students in becoming nuclear medicine physicians. Interestingly, there were medical schools without nuclear medicine training programs who also had a relatively large number of students pursue nuclear medicine training, most notably University of California at San Diego with 5 students, plus Columbia University and Wayne State University, each with 4 students.

The ABNM will also contact the radiology program directors at these medical schools. It will be interesting to learn what these medical schools do differently from most schools with nuclear medicine training programs who had 0-1 students pursuing nuclear medicine training.

The ABNM will also contact the program directors at the less successful medical schools to understand the challenges that result in so few medical students being interested in nuclear medicine training. The ABNM will share what it learns so that everyone can consider changes at their institutions that encourage more US medical school graduates to pursue a career in Nuclear Medicine.