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NRC WITHDRAWS ADVANCE NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is withdrawing an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on training and experience criteria for all individuals who use NRC-regulated radioactive materials in the practice of medicine.

An estimated 7 million diagnostic nuclear medicine procedures are performed each year in the United States, along with 30,000 radiopharmaceutical therapy procedures (the ingestion or injection of radioactive compounds for patient therapy treatment) and 50,000 brachytherapy procedures (the insertion or implantation of sealed sources containing radioactive material for patient therapy treatment). In addition, about 100,000 patients receive Cobalt-60 teletherapy treatments (external use of radiation for patient treatment) each year.

The NRC estimates that about 40 percent of these procedures are performed by NRC licensees and 60 percent by licensees of Agreement States (which are states that have accepted authority, through agreement with the NRC, over the licensing of radioactive materials within the state).

Currently the NRC reviews the training and experience of physicians, teletherapy physicists and radiation safety officers involved in or supervising the use of radioactive materials for medical purposes. The NRC was considering whether it should also have criteria for technologists and other non-physician workers who assist in handling the radioactive materials.

The existing requirements set out the training and experience requirements generally believed necessary for a physician to use radioactive materials safely and to protect workers, patients and the public from unnecessary radiation exposure.

On January 27, 1992, the NRC's medical Quality Management (QM) Program and Misadministration Rule became effective. NRC believes that implementation of this rule will result in increased direction and oversight by the authorized physician

user, thus mitigating the need for NRC to specify training and experience criteria for technologists and other non-physician workers who handle byproduct material.

The NRC staff continues to review and evaluate the adequacy of existing training and experience criteria for medical uses. The staff also continues to monitor the role of inadequate training or experience as a contributing factor to misadministration events reported to the NRC.

However, the Commission has concluded that the development of comprehensive training and experience criteria for the medical use of nuclear materials, as described in the advance notice of proposed rulemaking issued on May 25, 1988, is not appropriate at this time.

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