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Comments to NRC re Specialty Board Training

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Training and potentially certification are serious issues currently under consideration by a Task Group of the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and numerous international professional groups. It is a critical factor in the current IAEA/WHO International Action Plan on Radiation Protection of Patients in Medicine.

One approach as to whether board certification should be accepted is to see what problems currently exist in radiation protection in medicine and see if specialty board training/certification alone would have helped. Most people are aware of radiation burns occurring as a result of interventional cardiology and radiology procedures. Many physicians performing these procedures were specialty board certified before the technology of angioplasty, stents and intravascular brachytherapy existed.

CT scanning doses were not felt to be a particular problem a few years ago but with multislice scanners, high scan speeds, the equipment is being used much more and on patients that were never thought about just a few years ago.

Another area of current concern is transition to digital radiography. While the technology has the potential to reduce doses, in fact they have gone up in most studies. Certainly the majority of radiologists in practice never had basic physics and protection in these techniques.

As a result, I believe that specialty board training should only be accepted if it can be shown (1) that there is recertification/required continuing education every 10 years or less and (2) that the recertification/ continuing education process can be shown to encompass the radiation protection aspects of newer technologies.

Even the old NRC requirements are problematical since they assumed that once a physician/ physicist etc was board certified in nuclear medicine or radiation oncology, that the individual was perennially competent even if they had not practiced in 20 years of had appropriate continuing education.

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