

# Executive Director's Message

## Expansion in Therapeutic Practices in Nuclear Medicine

**Kirk A. Frey, MD, PhD** – *Executive Director, American Board of Nuclear Medicine*

Dear ABNM Diplomates,

It is my pleasure to support continued evolution of our Board certification and maintenance programs amidst a dramatic and ongoing evolution of our specialty. Most notably, Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging (NMMI) is experiencing a substantial expansion in therapeutic practices with the introduction and regulatory approvals of new, effective radiopharmaceuticals targeting metastatic neuroendocrine carcinoma and metastatic castrate-resistant prostate adenocarcinoma. Together, these evolving approaches are referred to as “theranostic,” recognizing that the radiopharmaceutical ligands involved are associated with both diagnostic imaging agents and parallel radiotherapeutic agents that target the same cancer cellular characteristics – these new radioligands serve as both Therapeutic and Diagnostic (*i.e.* Theranostic) innovations.

While the theranostic terminology is new, diplomates are aware that the original theranostic radiopharmaceuticals were associated with the introduction of nuclear medicine (NM) as a distinct medical specialty: sodium-radio-iodides employed for staging and therapy of differentiated thyroid carcinoma. The ongoing expansion of NMMI therapy to patients with neuroendocrine and prostate carcinomas will require added emphasis on these conditions, their alternative therapies and patient consultation regarding the relative risk/benefit aspects of theranostic treatments versus systemic medication-based therapies. The need for this expertise has stimulated national and international NMMI societies and agencies (including SNMMI, EANM and IAEA) to develop educational resources and recommendations

for our diplomates as well as our current resident and fellow trainees. The residency training requirements for NM are presently undergoing scheduled periodic review and revision by the ACGME NM Review Committee and updates are likely to reflect needed resident experience in the scientific and clinical aspects of oncology, radiation biology, and theranostic tracer dosimetry.

The ABNM approach to inclusion of theranostic principles will emphasize introduction in the Certification Exam reflecting increased residency experience. The Board recognizes that not all our active diplomates are practicing in therapy; however, the new theranostic imaging agents are of increasing utilization in NMMI clinics limited to diagnostic imaging. In these settings, it is important to review and interpret studies with necessary detail relevant to patient eligibility for theranostic therapy versus alternatives. Thus, the Continuing Certification exam and CertLink program will also introduce theranostic principles, albeit at a more gradual pace than in the Certification Exam. Diplomates are encouraged to become familiar with the new imaging and therapeutic agents through annual SNMMI meetings, focused theranostic seminars, and the recent review literature provided in the *Journal of Nuclear Medicine*.



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