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ABHP Board Meeting

The American Board of Health Physics (ABHP) held its fall Board Meeting in McLean, Virginia, on 17-18 November 2006. The following is a summary of significant issues and actions addressed by the Board at the fall meeting and in the latter half of 2006.

2006 Examination

The Part I and II exams were successfully administered with 111 candidates sitting for the Part I examination and 96 candidates sitting for the Part II examination. The Part II exam had a passing rate of 39 percent and, as a result, the Board has certified 37 new CHPs.

The Part I exam had a passing rate of 43 percent, down from last year's 20-year high of 56 percent. Performance on questions that had previously been on the exam scored slightly lower in 2006 than in 2005. In general, replacement questions scored better than the questions that were removed. A passing point workshop was held at the Health Physics Society annual meeting in Providence with 25 CHPs participating. The planning for the workshop took into consideration the extensive research that the Board conducted following the last passing point workshop. New techniques were tried to calibrate the results and to get more consistent results. The workshop confirmed the existing passing point for

the Part I exam at 95. The results of the passing point workshop were approved by the Board at the fall meeting. Contrary to the data for the 2005 exam, data from the 2006 exam found that candidates with traditional degrees (versus nontraditional degrees) or with multiple qualifying degrees (versus a single qualifying degree) passed the exam in greater numbers. Data from the 2005 exam did not show significant differences for these criteria in the Part I exam results. Exam data for 2004 was collected and found results more similar to the 2006 data than the 2005 data.

Performance data for 2006 remained consistent with data for 2005 and 2004 in that significantly more candidates with traditional degrees passed the Part II exam than those with nontraditional degrees. Also, significantly more candidates with multiple qualifying degrees passed the Part II exam than candidates with just a single qualifying degree.

The 39 percent pass rate for the Part II exam was a significant increase from the 20 percent pass

rate in 2005. Throughout the exam-preparation process, great effort was expended to minimize the proportion of calculational problems to provide a more balanced exam. While one year does not make a trend, the results are in the right direction and the Panel has been encouraged to continue to consider the relative proportion of calculational problems in the question selection process. The Board will continue to monitor this closely.

10 CFR 35 Changes and Board Actions

The 2005 changes to 10 CFR 35 by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) continue to have an impact on the activities of the ABHP. Until October 2005, the NRC accepted ABHP certification as evidence of fundamental knowledge required to be a radiation safety officer listed under a part 35 license. This is a gross simplification, but reasonably covers the situation prior to the recent changes.

The NRC decided not to list certifying bodies in its regulation,

but rather on the NRC Web site as it is easier to make changes at that location. In response to a petition for rulemaking regarding another portion of the training requirements, the staff developed detailed requirements for a certifying body to be listed. Unfortunately, even though the NRC clearly based its requirements for an RSO on the existing requirements for ABHP certification, the requirements were modified slightly with the effect that the ABHP could not assure that all of its CHPs would meet the new requirements, although we did not know this when the requirements came to our attention in July 2005.

The ABHP's application to be recognized as a certifying body under 10 CFR 35 was approved in October 2005, although the effective date of approved certifications was set at 1 January 2006 as the Board could not guarantee that all of its diplomates prior to this date fully met all of the NRC degree requirements.

An ABHP letter to the NRC in late 2005 stated the Board's rationale that all prior certifications were adequate as a measure of fitness for being an RSO. Needless to say, the NRC did not accept this argument and has listed the ABHP as meeting the RSO training requirements from 2006 onward.

Application files for CHPs were reviewed in 2006 to try and push back the effective date of the NRC approval. While this effort allowed the effective date to be pushed back to include all CHPs certified in 2005, the effort could go no farther as CHPs were found who did not strictly meet the NRC degree requirements, while they did meet the ABHP requirements in place at that time. The Board was aware that if we went back far

enough in the records, we would eventually find that CHPs who did not meet the degree requirements as candidates in the past have been allowed to become certified in extraordinary circumstances where the lack of a specific degree is compensated by extensive coursework in sciences, often in excess of that required for a qualifying degree. A new approach was required.

A letter analyzing the relevant NRC regulations and how these requirements were satisfied by the ABHP certification requirements was drafted and sent to the NRC in August 2006. This letter is posted on the American Academy of Health Physics (AAHP) Web site (www.aahp-abhp.org). The letter noted that there were three areas of criteria (specific degree requirement, examination, and experience) that were satisfied by an ABHP certification. The letter noted that the examination and experience requirements are met for all ABHP certifications since it began issuing certifications in 1960. Further, an estimated 98 percent of all certifications fully meet the NRC degree requirements, with the remainder meeting compensating academic requirements in lieu of a specific qualifying degree. While stating that it was the opinion of the ABHP that all of the 2,019 individuals (now 2,056) who had been granted certification "are more than qualified by knowledge and experience to be listed as RSOs . . .", it was also stated that the NRC could still meet the intent of its regulations by recognizing all ABHP certifications provided that applicants for listing as RSOs submit evidence of having the appropriate degree as required by NRC regulations.

The NRC responded in September 2006 that this approach was not allowed by its regulations.

On the same day that the ABHP received this reply from NRC, a petition for rulemaking was filed with the NRC by the American Association of Physicists in Medicine regarding similar issues to the Board concerns. This petition was published in the *Federal Register* (71 FR 64168, 1 November 2006). The Board is currently formulating appropriate actions to resolve this issue.

Canadian Radiation Protection Association (CRPA)

The Board continued contacts with the CRPA throughout 2006. Efforts are ongoing to make it easier for Canadians to obtain and maintain certifications from the ABHP. To this end, discussions are exploring the possibility of having a Canadian exam site for the 2007 examination.

Policy and Procedure Manual Changes

The Board approved a number of minor changes to the ABHP Policy Manual. These changes are submitted to the AAHP Executive Committee for ratification. The changes mostly involve artifacts left over from the transfer of duties from the ABHP to the AAHP and that no longer are applicable. There were no approved changes to the ABHP procedures from the fall meeting.

"CHP Corner" Articles

The Board continued its efforts to increase visibility of Board and Panel activities through "CHP Corner" articles throughout the year.

