Advanced Practice in Nuclear Medicine: Missouri Technologist survey results

Methodology
An eight-question survey was mailed to nuclear medicine technologists in Missouri to ascertain technologist interest in pursuing a master’s degree in an educational program for advanced practice in nuclear medicine. It was explained in a survey cover letter that the University of Missouri at Columbia and St. Louis University were considering the formation of a consortium with the University of Arkansas for Medical Science (UAMS)’s Department of Imaging and Radiation Sciences and Division of Nuclear Medicine Imaging Sciences to develop a Nuclear Medicine Advanced Practice track within its Master of Imaging Sciences degree program.

Names and addresses were supplied by the Nuclear Medicine Technology Certification Board (NMTCB) and represented all technologists in Missouri who were currently certified by the NMTCB. Missouri does not require nuclear medicine technologists to be licensed to practice within the state, and consequently, there are no requirements that NMT’s be certified or to have undertaken formal education and training to practice. It must also be assumed that some certified technologists in Missouri are registered not with the NMTCB but with the ARRT, which is a recognized alternative for NMT certification. It is therefore difficult to estimate the percentage of the population that was reached by the needs survey, but conservatively speaking, approximately 80% of the nuclear medicine technologists in Missouri were contacted.

Surveys were sent to 293 technologists with reminder notices sent to those who had not responded by the deadline. Technologists were allowed to return the surveys by fax or by mail in a postage paid return envelope. The survey was conducted in January and February, 2008.

Results
Summary: Seventy surveys were returned for a response rate of 23.8%. All sections of the state were represented among the respondents as were all types of facilities where nuclear medicine technologists and potentially advanced practice professionals might work.

Interest in enrolling in a Master of Imaging Sciences degree program was high among respondents to the survey. When asked about interest in enrolling in a Master of Imaging Sciences degree program, 52.9% indicated they were definitely interested or interested. If interested, 42.2% would like to enroll in the next two years, and another 30.3% would consider enrolling in the next two to five years. The principle reasons for pursuing the proposed degree was for personal satisfaction (38.6%) and a positive impact on potential income (34.3%).

Qualified applicants will most likely have to possess a bachelor’s degree, have graduated from an accredited (undergraduate) program in nuclear medicine technology, and have a minimum of two years of experience. Survey results indicated there was a very well qualified applicant pool for the proposed degree. Seventy-seven percent of the respondents have a bachelor’s degree or higher, 88.6% have graduated from an
accredited program, and the average number of years of experience was 13 years with a median of 10 years.

The following represents detailed results for each item on the survey.

1. Would you be interested in enrolling in a Master of Imaging Sciences degree program that would prepare graduates in advanced practice in nuclear medicine?
   - 28.6% Definitely interested (n=20)
   - 24.3% Interested (n=17)
   - 17.1% Maybe (n=12)
   - 18.6% Not interested (n=13)
   - 11.4% Definitely not interested (n=8)

2. If interested in the proposed UAMS program, how soon would you want to enroll?
   - 42.4% Within the next two years (n=28)
   - 30.3% In two to five years (n=20)
   - 0% In five to seven years
   - 27.3% Not applicable (n=18)

3. Do you have a bachelor's or higher level degree?
   - 77.2% Yes (n=54)
   - 22.8% No (n=16)

4. Have you graduated from an accredited program in nuclear medicine technology?
   - 88.6% Yes (n=62)
   - 11.4% No (n=8)

5. How many years of experience do you have in nuclear medicine?
   - Average number of years: 13.3
   - Median: 10 years
   - Mode: 4 years and 20 years
   - Range: 1-40 years

6. What would motivate you the most to pursue this graduate program? (multiple responses by some respondents)
   - 38.6% Personal satisfaction (n=27)
   - 27.1% Professional status (n=19)
   - 17.1% Job security (n=12)
   - 34.3% Potential income (n=24)
   - 5.7% Other: necessity, career advancement increased flexibility in the workplace
7. In what type of facility do you currently work? (multiple responses by some respondents)
   - **54.3%** Hospital setting, general nuclear medicine
   - **4.3%** Outpatient Imaging Center Rural
   - **8.6%** Outpatient Imaging Center Urban
   - **18.6%** Cardiology Practice
   - **7.1%** PET Imaging Practice
   - **10.0%** Other: corporate, mobile cardiology, IT analyst, IT management, research, temp worker, sales

8. In what part of the state do you currently work?
   - **22.1%** Northwest Missouri (n=15)
   - **5.9%** North Central Missouri (n=4)
   - **7.3%** Northeast Missouri (n=5)
   - **41.1%** Central Missouri* (n=28)
   - **16.2%** Southwest Missouri (n=11)
   - **7.3%** Southeast Missouri (n=5)

*Respondents who indicated they lived in the St. Louis area were included in this section. However, other St. Louis residents may have self-selected other areas of Missouri as their place of residence.