Focus on Diagnostic Radiology

Redesigned 16-Month ABR Pathway Leading to Certifications in Both Diagnostic Radiology and Nuclear Radiology

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The purpose of this column is to inform the academic community that the ABR has approved conditions and requirements for a redesigned 16-month pathway within any Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME)-accredited 48-month diagnostic radiology (DR) residency program. Effective July 1, 2016, this redesigned pathway leads to dual eligibility for primary certification in (DR) and subspecialty certification in nuclear radiology (NR). Resident applications and program sponsorship agreements will be available soon.

Major Changes in Pathway Criteria

The redesigned 16-month DR/NR program contains changes intended to make it available to a broadened spectrum of DR residency programs.

- First, any ACGME-accredited DR residency program may now sponsor one or more of its residents in this pathway. A co-existing ACGME-accredited NR fellowship and/or nuclear medicine (NM) residency program is no longer required for eligibility. Thus, the 16-month ABR pathway is now potentially available to the entire DR community.
- Second, the composition of the required 16 months of clinical NR/NM training has been modified.
  - While at least eight months must be comprised of dedicated NR/NM/molecular imaging (MI) experiences, up to four months may be spent in pre-approved NR/NM/MI-related disciplines. Related disciplines include but are not limited to: abdominal/body/cardiovascular/musculoskeletal/thoracic imaging; head and neck imaging; interventional radiology (e.g., ⁹⁰Y microspheres); neuroradiology; non-radioisotopic molecular imaging; oncologic imaging; and others, including limited research, on request.
  - Four months are still met through the core DR program requirements.
Thus, the 16-month pathway now consists of: eight dedicated NR/NM/MI months, plus four NR/NM/MI-related months, plus four core DR months. If necessary, some of the training requirements may be completed at affiliated institutions or through agreements with non-affiliated institutions with an ACGME-accredited DR training program, as long as the ABR is informed. Note that up to two months of NR/NM during PGY-1 may be counted toward the 16-month total if performed at an institution with an ACGME-accredited DR program.

### Redesigned 16-month DR/NR ABR Pathway

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Requirement</th>
<th>Months</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NR/NM/MI-dedicated months</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NR/NM/MI-related months</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core DR months</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total months</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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- Third, the 16 months of NR/NM training and experience may be completed *at any time* during the 48-month residency. There is no longer a requirement for 10 consecutive months. This change affords more flexibility to accommodate local program logistics in meeting the pathway curriculum.
- Fourth, clinical hybrid modality experience in **both** SPECT/CT and in PET/CT must be provided.
- Lastly, the pathway must fulfill or exceed the ABR requirements for Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) training, including classroom and laboratory instruction, and experience necessary for Authorized User (AU) eligibility as specified in 10 CFR 35. 290, .392, .394 and .396. Aligned with the ACGME nuclear radiology fellowship requirements, therapeutic experience must include at least:
  - 10 oral administrations of Na\(^{131}\)I \(\leq 33\) mCi \((\leq 1.22\) GBq\)
  - 5 oral administrations of Na\(^{131}\)I \(> 33\) mCi \((> 1.22\) GBq\)
  - 5 parenteral administrations of alpha emitter, beta emitter, or < 150 keV
This experience must be supervised and attested to by one or more Authorized Users (AUs) with corresponding AU statuses.

### Resident Application and Pathway Sponsorship

An interested DR resident must submit an application to the ABR. It must be accompanied by a sponsorship agreement from the DR program director. The sponsorship agreement must express commitment to the resident’s training in accordance with the ABR’s redesigned 16-month DR-NR Pathway requirements and contain a detailed plan for providing the participating resident with the requisite training.

The sponsoring program must have at least one full-time faculty in NR/NM who possesses valid ABR-NR subspecialty certification and/or valid specialty certification by the American Board of Nuclear Medicine (ABNM). It must also have AUs or access to AUs in each section of the NRC regulations in which patient administration experience is required. One NR/NM faculty member
must be designated as the sponsoring faculty by the radiology department chair or, at the discretion of the chair, by the DR residency program director. The DR residency program director may serve as the sponsoring faculty, if appropriate. The sponsoring faculty member must commit to the planning and oversight of the required resident training, and, with the DR residency program director, will complete an ABR sponsorship agreement taking responsibility for the pathway. Furthermore, attestations required by the ABR regarding a resident’s completion of such training shall be the responsibility of the sponsoring faculty. Should there be any change in the person assuming this role during a resident’s participation in the 16-month pathway, the ABR must be notified within three months of the change.

**Initial Board Certification and Maintenance of Certification**

With appropriate documentation and attestations, residents completing the 16-month NR/NM Pathway (or those completing an accredited NR fellowship year and not yet DR certified) will be admitted to the ABR Certifying Examination at 15 months post-residency. They will have two options to achieve ABR certifications in both DR and NR.

Standard Option 1: Eligible candidates may first sit for the DR Specialty Certifying Examination, and, once DR-certified, sit for the NR Subspecialty Certifying Examination at the next available opportunity or at a later date at their discretion.

New Option 2: Eligible candidates may sit for both DR Specialty and NR Subspecialty Certifying Examinations **concurrently**. The candidates will take three appropriate NR modules plus any required DR modules. Option 2 is a new board certification process that might be available as early as fall 2017.

Diplomates certified by the ABR in DR and in NR may maintain both certifications in a single MOC program administered by the ABR.

Questions regarding the new DR/NR Pathway from interested programs may be directed to information@theabr.org or (520) 790-2900.