

More demands are being made on Medical Physicists than ever before. Increasingly sophisticated technology is being introduced into clinical practice at an accelerated pace with little time to train the patient care team. Concurrently, there is a calling for higher quality and safety in clinical practice as well as decreasing funding associated with technical tasks. Surveys performed by the AAPM indicate that a primary reason physicists attend the annual meeting is to acquire information to improve their job performance and efficiency. The Professional Program is structured to address these concerns.

The issue of quality improvement, how to define and improve quality in clinical practice is the topic of several presentations. The program kicks off with the Professional Symposium and an overview of the many aspects of our profession that contribute to quality care. In the core presentation of the Symposium, Dr. Michael Rock will discuss quality care and quality improvement in health care at the institutional and national level. This puts the efforts in the profession of medical physics into perspective in the larger quality paradigm.

The Professional Program continues with discussions on technical performance and the development of performance standards for established technologies followed by a presentation on how to successfully integrate new technology into practice. Additional personnel are often needed to perform new, more complex activities and justifying the required level of staffing to support these programs is reviewed. The new member symposium provides an overview of the organizational structure of the AAPM, and how to get the most out of both professional and academic opportunities. Senior experts in the field will also be available to discuss what they have learned in their many years in medical physics.

Training of personnel is essential to quality practice and education carries serious responsibility for those providing the training. For those acting as preceptors, the expectations and liabilities of this role will be explained.

Despite our best efforts, things go wrong. Several sessions focus on errors in practice, how to identify potential errors, diminish the chance of errors occurring and how to develop quality measures that prevent errors. The role of regulatory agencies is also described and how they participate in accomplishing our common goal of safe, high quality patient care. The final session addresses a need that has not been adequately addressed in our profession. This is the topic of writing bid specifications for major equipment purchases. We all do this, but there are few guidelines on how to actually put these bid specifications together properly.

The focus of the Professional Program is quality in patient care, how to define it, improve it, and practice it. The goal is to provide a professional program of use to you personally in your professional and academic endeavors.

Objectives:

To understand current definitions of quality care

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To understand how professional efforts contribute to improved quality of care
To provide direct and useful information for practicing medical physicists