Licensure, Registration and Certification: Current Status and Future Options

Ruth E. McBurney, CHP
Executive Director, CRCPD

Overview

- Definition of terms
- Survey of current licensure states
- State regulatory differences and gaps concerning credentialing and authorization of trained medical physicists
- Future options for assurance of credentialed medical physicists nationwide

Terms Applicable to Professional Recognition and Authorization

- Certification
- Registry
- Licensure
- State registration

Certification

- Process of recognizing medical physicists (or other professions) who have satisfied standards within their profession
- Issued by non-government entity, such as a certification board (e.g., ABR, ABMP)
- Minimum education and experience requirements
- Comprehensive examinations in specialty
- Continuing education requirements

Registry

- Some practices, such as radiologic technologists, maintain a registry of certified individuals (separate from certifying board)
- Non-government entity
- Process
  - Annual registration
  - Agree to comply with rules and regulations
  - Continue to comply with ethics standards
  - Meet continuing education requirements

Licensure/Licensing

- License: A permit to practice a profession issued by a state government agency
- Requires minimum training and experience plus examination (in most cases)
- Recognition of Board certification in lieu of state-administered exam
- Grandfathering period for experienced individuals in the field of practice
- Standards may vary from certification
- Continuing education may be requirement

State Registration

- States that do not have licensure laws may register (form of approval, varies in requirements):
  - Individuals as medical physicists
  - Companies or individuals as service providers
  - Companies as radiation services, including medical physics services (e.g., machine calibration, shielding determination, consultation, surveys)

Benefits for Licensure and Certification of Professionals

- Certification and state licensure laws implemented to assure greater assurance of quality in the practice of medical physics
- Title protection for medical physicists
- Assurance that qualified individuals practice in the profession
- Limits to scope of practice
- May improve facility compliance with radiation control standards, but not always

Survey of Licensure States

- Series of questions to the four states that license medical physicists
- Input from radiation control program staff, licensing agency, and medical community (in some cases)

Process

- Hawaii
  - Certification in field of practice
  - License "medical physics service"—at least one physicist (individually or group) must be board certified in the field services are provided
- New York
  - Verification of certification or training and experience and examination by a specified certifying body in field of practice
- Texas
  - Verification of certification or training and experience and state-administered examination

Survey Question: Does medical physics licensure or certification improve the quality of care in your state?

Hawaii: Yes
Comment: On two occasions, high exposures were found on new CT units during acceptance testing.
New York: Yes
Texas: Yes
Comment: Hardly any complaints from medical community
(from anecdotal information from radiation control and medical physics licensure board members, not from medical community)

Impacts on Access and Compliance

Survey Question: In your opinion, does Medical Physicist licensure or certification reduce access to health care?

- All said no

Survey Question: In your opinion has Medical Physicist licensure or certification had any impact on the regulatory compliance of medical facilities?

- HI: positive impact to ensure health and safety
- NY: helped ensure compliance with QA requirements for therapy
- TX: improved relationship with regulatory staff; does not assure facility compliance in all cases, but involvement of a medical physicist assists with communication and quality

Other Survey Questions

Attribute	States		
	Hawaii	New York	Texas
Cont. Ed. Required	No	Yes	Yes
Enforcement Capability	Yes	Yes	Yes
Enforcement Actions Taken	0	0(?)	1
Reciprocity	No	Yes	Yes

State Requirements for Licensure and Registration of Medical Physicists

4 states license MP's
24 states register:

- Individual MP's or
- MP services

22 states have no licensure or registration requirements

Types of Registration

- Terminology and type of registration (individual vs. service/company) vary from state to state (blue states)
- Registration for specific specialties:
  - Diagnostic (other than mammography) 17
  - Surveys/Equipment Evaluation 2
  - Mammography 18
    - Mammography Only 1
  - Nuclear Medicine 6
  - Shielding Evaluation 16
  - Other physics consulting 1
  - Therapy 20
  - RAM Therapy 1
  - Q/A Testing 1

Examples of Individuals Registered

- Diagnostic Imaging Specialist
- Authorized Medical Physicist
- Therapeutic Radiological Physicist
- Radiation Service Provider
- Radiation Expert

Examples of Services Registered (Company or Individual)

- Calibration of radiation machines
- Shielding calculation/verification
- Equipment performance evaluation
- Quality assurance testing
- Medical physics consultation

Note: In these instances, a group practice would go under one registration.

Nationwide Gaps/Issues

- Licensure
  - Probably will not happen in every state
  - Complaints on length of time for out of state physicists to obtain licensure in a state
  - Grandfathering of non-board certified individuals causes confusion on requirements of certain regulations (e.g., mammography)
  - No national driver in effect
- Registration
  - Different terminology
  - Different types of registration (profession/individual vs. service/company)
  - Requirements for medical physicists differ

- State legislation/regulatory authorization
  - Model state legislation: The agency is authorized to require registration or licensing of other sources of radiation.
  - Other legislation example: The board shall adopt rules and guidelines that provide for licensing and registration for the control of sources of radiation. (Greater latitude to register medical physicists or services)

Filling the Gaps

- AAPM efforts to bring about licensure in more states
- CRCPD's Suggested State Regulations
  - Model regulations for consistency among states
  - Involve input from/collaborations with other organizations and federal agencies
  - SR-Z Suggested Regulations - Part Z: Medical Credentialing—includes suggested regulations for credentialing medical physicists
- Other options
  - National registry?

National Registry—How Would It Work?

- Database maintained by national organization, such as CRCPD
- Only appropriately credentialed (Board certification by recognized boards) would be listed in the database.
- Suggested state regulations would provide language to required medical physicists to be licensed by a state or listed in the national registry.
- Requires buy-in/agreement by radiation control programs in adopting regulations and to use national registry as a national source

Conclusion

- Various methods exist to address the adequate credentialing of medical physicists, both within the profession and through state legislation and regulations.
- Gaps continue to exist among the states in training and experience and certification requirements for medical physicists.
- CRCPD works collaboratively with other organizations with similar goals, including AAPM, to provide consistent national approaches to this and other radiation protection issues.

References

American Association of Physicists in Medicine, www.aapm.org
American Board of Medical Physics, http://www.abmpexam.com/
American Board of Radiology, http://theabr.org/
American Registry of Radiologic Technologists, Licensing versus Certification and Registration, www.ARRT.com
State licensure laws
FL: http://www.doh.state.fl.us/mqa/medphys/dr_lic_req.html
HI: http://gen.doh.hawaii.gov/sites/har/AdmRules1/11-45.pdf
NY: http://www.op.nysed.gov/medphys.htm
TX: http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/mp/default.shtm