

New Member Symposium
AAPM Annual Meeting 2010
P. Halvorsen, moderator

The New Member Symposium is an opportunity for members to become familiar with how the Association is structured to meet the needs of the profession – and of you as an individual member. Most of the Association’s senior leadership will be present, and will be available to answer questions. This year, we are trying a slightly different format. Members of the AAPM Executive Committee will speak about the overall organization and our relationship with other societies, as well as the newly formed Administrative Council. This will be followed by representatives of the Professional, Science, and Education Councils describing the initiatives currently under way within their council and their relevance to you as a member, with a specific focus on how new members can become involved and contribute to meeting each Council’s objectives.

The AAPM is a volunteer-driven non-profit organization furthering the professional, scientific and educational objectives of the medical physics profession. As such, the members are at the top of the organizational chart, and the Board of Directors exists to represent the membership’s priorities in setting policy for the organization. Reporting directly to the Board are four Councils: Science, Education, Professional, and Administrative.

The Science Council oversees the scientific evaluation of the various technologies used in medical physics and develops documents providing a compendium of the science on a particular topic, along with recommendations for appropriate tests and measurements to properly characterize a particular modality. The Council is structured into three main entities: Research, Therapy, and Imaging. Each main committee contains subcommittees and Task Groups devoted to specific subjects. The Science Council oversees the development of the majority of the Association’s well known and highly respected Task Group Reports, which are often the strongest reference material on a particular modality of medical physics.

The Education Council provides guidance on the appropriate curricula for graduate medical physics degree programs and clinical residency training programs, and oversees the organization’s continuing education program. The Education Council provides guidance to CAMPEP, the organization that accredits graduate degree, residency, and continuing education programs for medical physicists, and has been instrumental in helping to clarify and modify the ABR’s Maintenance of Certification program.

The Professional Council provides guidance on matters affecting medical physicists' professional practice environments, whether in clinical or non-clinical settings. The concept of a consistent definition of a Qualified Medical Physicist (QMP) for clinical settings was developed through the Professional Council, as was the Scope of Practice definition. These documents have been widely referenced by regulatory entities and organizations setting practice standards and accreditation standards. The Council is currently exploring the development of consistent national Practice Guidelines for clinical medical physics, has developed guidelines for peer review and works to facilitate peer reviews among physicists, and is exploring how to provide more effective training of staff in recognizing and responding to radiation-related incidents. The Council also provides several valuable member services such as the annual professional survey, a forum for new professionals, evaluation of trends in the medical physics workforce, monitoring of reimbursement rules and advocacy to the policy-setting bodies in this regard, and interaction with vendors to convey our members' suggestions for product improvements. Finally, the Council developed and maintains the Association's Code of Ethics and mediates ethical disputes involving members.

The Administrative Council is new this year. This was formed to consolidate many functions of the Association which were not previously in any Council, and activities that span multiple Councils. Hence, the Government and Regulatory Affairs committee moved from the Professional Council to this new Council since it spans all Councils, and the Journal management committee now belongs within the Administrative Council, as well as oversight of the Newsletter and other electronic media (e.g. our website). The Meeting Coordination Committee, which oversees the Annual Meeting and other special-topic meetings, joined the Administrative Council, and the Chapters are organized under this new Council as well.

Ultimately, the AAPM's core work is performed by medical physicist volunteers, and our ability to positively affect the profession depends on the willingness of our members to contribute their time and expertise toward this goal. We encourage you to learn more about the AAPM structure and to contact the chairs of committees you may have an interest in – they would welcome your participation.