



Corner

The following letters address the issue of the operational relationship between the American Academy of Health Physics (AAHP) and the American Board of Health Physics (ABHP). The issue of this interface was first discussed with AAHP membership at the annual meeting of the Health Physics Society (HPS) in Atlanta, Georgia.

If you would like to contribute to this discussion, please address any correspondence for either the "CHP Corner" or the *CHP News* to:

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AAHP/ABHP--Successful Working Relationship Requires Change

James E. Turner, CHP, AAHP President

At the open meeting of the Academy in Atlanta, I reported briefly in the limited time available on the ongoing review of the relationship of the ABHP and the AAHP. Tax and other legal requirements apparently do not permit the continuing operation of the two independent, nonprofit corporations, handling one another's funds and assisting in each other's operations. The problem (which has nothing to do with health physics) could be resolved in two ways: 1) deincorporation of one of the organizations and have it be a part of the other, or 2) have two separate and completely independent organizations.

Given that changes must be made, we have gone back to the fundamental charges given in the Bylaws of the ABHP and the AAHP. They are carefully crafted in order to uphold the independence of the Board in its technical excellence and in the certification process. At the same time, the Bylaws provide that the certification process represent not only the decision of a board of eight persons, but also a reflection of the community of all CHPs, who wear its stamp, through their elected representatives in the Academy. In considering changes that must be made, a number of basic questions and issues arise that require thought and time to work out. I have not found a single person who wants to change the way in which the certification process has been so successfully working. The Board has justly earned the highest respect, esteem, confidence

and gratitude as the certifying body for our profession. The basic questions revolve around *how* we achieve and guarantee the objectives that I believe we all want.

The Board and Academy are at work, and we need input from all CHPs as to how our profession will be best served. We are preparing a questionnaire to be mailed out soon to each member of the Academy. It will address a number of important matters about certification and the examination process, in addition to the corporate status. The questionnaire will give us all an opportunity to assess where we are and plan for the future.

An Opportunity to Improve the Academy and the Board

Carl H. Distenfeld, CHP, ABHP Chair

During the January 1993 meeting of the AAHP Executive Committee, it became clear the present separate incorporation of the Academy and the American Board of Health Physics would have to be changed to accommodate tax law. Deincorporation of the Board and integration within the Academy was discussed as a solution and as the direction envisioned at the formation of the Academy.

A previous Board Chair, and the present Vice Chair, were present at the Executive Committee meeting. Both wrote opinions expressing concern over precipitously altering a Board structure that has provided 30 years of exemplary certification service. In July, after many written and telephone discussions with present and past Board members, all eight Board members voted to take no action regarding the Board structure.

Academy functions are beneficial to the Board. The benefits include selection of examination sites, control of the continuing education program, establishment of the Ethics Committee, and provision for financial administration. From the Board's perspective, some adjustment of the Board/Academy relationship would be useful to both. Three concerns evolved from the discussions. They were:

- 1) Replacement of Board members with nominees that are more experienced in the mechanics of certification.
- 2) The Academy has always maintained Board independence on certification matters. However, Bylaws require Academy approval of all Board procedures and policies.

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3) As a person-power resource, the Academy is larger than the Board. The Board believes the CHP community would be better served if the Academy would continue to observe Board functions, continue to support the Board, but also address professional issues that affect CHPs.

Presently, Board vacancies are filled by the Academy Executive Committee voting on slates of candidates nominated by the Academy Nominations Committee. Part of the qualifications for replacement of Board members should be direct experience with the examination process. The Panels are forty-two member resources of professionals. It would be better to fill Board vacancies with past Panel members who have demonstrated a propensity for timely performance. The present system for Board member replacement works against excellent past Panel members who are not known to the Academy Executive Committee. The Board proposes the Academy appoint Panel replacements, and allow the Board to appoint its replacements.

Most Board procedures were written to guide the examination process. As an example, a recent grading procedure involved two Board members and two sitting Panel officers over a period of several years. The time invested to develop and to research the effect of the change totaled several tens of person-hours. An amalgamation of ideas comprising the new grading system was mailed to the Board members to allow study before action. The change was unanimously adopted by the Board at the Atlanta meeting. Detailed care employed by the Board could not be improved by Academy Executive Committee action. The Board believes carrying out its certification responsibilities independently can only be achieved by autonomy in adopting and adjusting certification policies and procedures. The Academy has resolved that the Board's certification functions should be independent; only Board control of evolving procedures and policies satisfies this resolution.

At least two professional issues are before the CHP community. They are licensure and the appropriateness of ABHP certification to support mammographic radiology. The Academy is constituted to oversee the Board and not to be proactive. The Board believes Academy resources can better serve by actively working toward solutions to these and other professional issues. The Board proposes the Academy Bylaws be changed to promote an expanded professional role, as well as the issues noted above.

Keith J. Schiager, CHP

At the opening meeting of the Academy in Atlanta, I spoke out somewhat impulsively about the delay in terminating the separate corporate status of the ABHP, and I apologize for implying that the Board members were deliberately obstructing the will of the majority of CHPs. I know that the Board members are dedicated to the best interests of the certification process and that the delay they

voted for was to provide them more time to review the implications of disincorporating. I am disturbed, however, that they have so little confidence in their many predecessors, both on the Board and on the Academy's Executive Committee who, during the past four or five years, worked very diligently to develop Academy Bylaws that would assure the independence and continued support of the Board.

It is also of some concern that the Board would object to review of its policies and major procedures by the Executive Committee of the Academy; the Academy Bylaws do not require approval by the Executive Committee, merely review and concurrence. The intent was not to interfere with Board operations, but simply to provide an oversight function by individuals elected by the full body of CHPs. Mostly, I am concerned that anyone would seriously suggest that the Board should reject a democratic nomination process in favor of the old, self-perpetuating status, although I agree that it would be beneficial to use previous service on an examining panel as one criterion for nomination to the Board. I am now convinced that the majority of the Board members are supportive of the structure contained in the AAHP Bylaws, and I regret that I castigated all of them collectively.

Ronald L. Kathren, CHP

When I spoke out at the Academy business meeting in Atlanta in July, it was to express my surprise and disappointment at having learned at that very meeting that the incorporation arrangements between the Academy and the Board were still not complete, although they had been voted on and approved by the membership some years ago. I do not understand why this is the case, nor did those attending the meeting receive a satisfactory explanation. The issues have been clearly stated by Academy (and now HPS) Past-President Keith Schiager, with whom I am in total accord.

I therefore urged the Academy and the Board at the Academy meeting, and do so again, to delay no longer with the incorporation of the Board and the Academy into a single entity. Let us create no schism within our ranks, but simply move forward and consummate the plan that was approved overwhelmingly by the body of CHPs so many years ago. The already approved plan needs no revote or ratification by the members, nor are there real legal impediments to the incorporation process. There are only advantages to the profession of health physics, and as a CHP who has served in the trenches on both the Panel of Examiners and ABHP, and now as Director-Elect of the Academy, I implore the elected Academy officers and directors and the eight ABHP members to join ranks and accomplish in a spirit of cooperation and professionalism what should have been accomplished some years ago. ■