

How to submit your requirements for successful accreditation.**IMPORTANT ACCREDITATION INFORMATION****Complying with requirements:**

Although it can sometimes seem otherwise, accreditation groups are not out to make the process unreasonable for you. They are in place to set minimum acceptable standards for the practice of nuclear imaging. When you received your license to use radioactive materials, you were given certain guidelines to follow in your laboratory. Review these first before moving forward. If you are not currently in compliance with these guidelines, start implementing them now. Dates for performance will be required on your accreditation application.

Documentation:

All of the accrediting groups, as well as local and federal licensing groups require you to document what is being done in your facility. This may include patient dosage information, disposal records, imaging system QC and physician or technologist continuing education. Review your records to make sure they are complete and up to date. Once you request the accreditation materials, the clock starts ticking. Do as much as you can prior to requesting the application.

Careful preparation:

Find out what the accreditation group will ask for well in advance. There are multiple groups that can provide accreditation and one of them may be better suited to your practice than another. For instance, if you do not do any cardiac imaging, an application to ICANL is not what you want. If accreditation requires reading studies within a certain period of time (24 hours) and if you currently do not meet that requirement, investigate ways to accomplish this.

Be aware of any other guidelines necessary:

The introduction of federal regulations (HIPAA) are not only directed at the insurance carriers or patient or patient confidentiality within the office, they are directed at patient confidentiality at all times. For instance, if you review images outside your office using attachments to emails, these could already be violating the HIPAA guidelines.

Quality control studies:

In addition to those clinical studies that are submitted, you will likely be asked to submit images of "phantoms." These are devices with inserts of known sizes and shapes. You may be asked to perform studies on them with different isotopes, coinciding with the types of clinical studies (planar or SPECT) that you do in your practice. Make sure that you have the required phantoms available and that you set aside enough time for your technologist to acquire the studies. This part of the accreditation procedure may take more than one day to complete and each portion may take more than an hour to acquire the needed data.

Determine acceptable procedure guidelines:

Each accreditation group makes minimum and/or suggested procedure guidelines available for your use. Review these and determine whether or not your practice currently follows these guidelines. If you currently perform a procedure differently from the guideline, review it with your staff and begin doing your clinic work in accord with the guideline. When you submit clinic data for accreditation, you will be asked about the procedure that was used. It will shorten the process (and possibly save resubmission fees) if your procedure coincides with their suggestion.

Review the submission requirements:

Different groups review phantom and clinic data to be submitted in different ways. Once you have decided which accreditation group you will submit data to, review how they want the data submitted. Some groups will want raw patient acquisition data on a CD or optical disk, some may ask for video-tape, and some may ask for film. For instance, one group requires that you submit a film with all of the reconstructed SPECT slices from a phantom. The slices must be minimum size on the film and you must submit only a certain number of films. Make sure that you can submit the data in the form requested.

Set a schedule:

The accreditation groups are not going to give you 24 hours to complete everything, nor are they going to extend 6 months. After you have reviewed the requirements and determine what you need to do, make a schedule of the tasks to be accomplished.

Designate a coordinator:

This might be the most important step you will take in gaining accreditation. Designate a “point person” to coordinate all the activities involved. This person should review assignments (they may not be able to do everything themselves) for the individual tasks and keep track of when each item is accomplished. They should be aware of the items that are on the list and also be aware of the submission requirements. This is the person who will determine if the data to be submitted is complete and accurate. Weekly meetings should take place to review tasks, assignments and deadlines.

Submission review:

Just before your practice submits the packet to the accreditation agency, review the requirements one more time to determine how they compare to your submission. You can “fail” the accreditation process (they don’t hand out incompletes), simply by neglecting to submit the required information. If you need to resubmit all of your data there will be addition fees. Carefully taking one final check of the materials will save you time, effort and money.

*These key steps can be extremely valuable in preparing for your accreditation.
If you have any questions regarding the process we would be happy to speak with you and determine how we can be of assistance.
Our expertise in this area is formidable.*

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