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Status of Medical Physics in Korea

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The Korea Society of Medical Physics (KSMP) was first established in Korea in 1990. At the same time, the KSMP published the "Korea Dosimetry Protocol" and the "Korean Journal of Medical Physics". Recently, an increase in the number and complexity of radiation therapies and medical images has highlighted the need for more educated and trained medical physicist in Korea. The purpose of this presentation is to discuss the status of medical physics, including an education/training program dosimetry protocol systems and a certified examination in Korea.

Initially, there were only small numbers of medical physicists due to the lack of a regular education system and the limited number of institutes where they could work. Owing to the rapid growth of the demand for the qualified physicist, during 1999-2000, the number of medical physicists has increased from approximately 80 to 300. However, only a small number of medical physicists work in a clinical environment. Up to now, there are five regular education programs for MS and Ph.D. medical physicists from five certified graduate schools. Since 1991, the KSMP also provides a highly advanced education program for junior medical physicists, who have no opportunity to undertake regular medical physics programs and need to prepare for certification exam. However, only a couple of adequate training is now available in Korea. Some hospitals have in-house training or residency programs for junior medical physicists under the supervision of senior of certified medical physicist.

The strict requirement of education and training experience in a clinical environment should be satisfactory for the candidates to take a certificate examination in medical physics. Currently, there are approximately more than 50 certified medical physicists on the field of r`adiation therapy (45), diagnostic radiology (2) and nuclear medicine (3). A new certification examination has been tried under a government was not solved yet. In the near future, particular dosimetry protocol system has been developed by KSMP in cooperative with KRISS and KFDA.

With the establishment of close trilateral cooperative structure among KRISS, the government administration and the hospital, the achievement of world class medical metrology in Korea will be accomplished.