New England Chapter of the AAPM (NEAAPM)

Notable NEAAPM Events

- 1964 1st NEAAPM Constitution
- 1975 Constitution Revised, NEAAPM merges with two older groups: NERPO and BMPG
- 1981 AAPM Annual meeting held in Boston. First Physics ‘Phun Run’ held!
- 1987 Connecticut declares independence! CAMPS Chapter formed. Some members maintain ties to both groups.
- 1995 AAPM Annual Meeting held in Boston

A Short History of the New England Chapter of the AAPM (NEAAPM)

New England has a history of professional medical physics activities going to the very early days of the AAPM. The greater Boston area, in particular, is home to a number of medical schools and affiliated teaching hospitals with a strong tradition of being at the forefront of technical innovation.

The details of the very early origins are somewhat fragmentary, though the original constitution which created the New England chapter has survived. The document, written in January 1964, stated that the chapter would include the states of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. It was signed on March 3rd, 1964 by then AAPM president Edward (Ted) Webster. Originally from England, Ted was also from the Boston Area. He came to MIT in 1949 for postdoctoral work in nuclear physics and engineering and during this time he became involved in a 2-MV cancer treatment program with Boston’s Lahey Clinic. He later joined the staff of the department of Radiology at Massachusetts General Hospital in 1953 in the newly created post of physicist. In 1958 he became a charter member of the AAPM and served as the 5th president for the organization in 1963. Dr. Webster would have a long and distinguished career at MGH, retiring in 2001 after 47 years of service. He passed away in December 2005.

While Ted Webster was from New England, his signature on the 1964 constitution was as AAPM President, and not as representative of the New England chapter per se. The signature for Secretary-Treasurer of the New England Chapter is that of William H. Elliot who appears to be the oldest documented member of the NEAAPM board. While not remembered specifically by older members still in New England today, he does appear on the 1959 list of charter members of the AAPM. A literature search reveals that in 1964 he was a physicist working at the Physics Research Laboratory at MGH. He appears on a number of publications from 1963-1968, including an article in the Journal Nature, all co-authored with well known physicist and research laboratory director Gordon Brownell. His last paper in 1991 gives his affiliation as the National Research Council, Washington, D.C.

After 1964, no records for the New England Chapter have surfaced which detail any activities or board members for almost a decade. However, two other New England medical physics groups were well known to exist at this time: the Boston Medical Physics Group (BMPG) and the New England Radiological Physics Organization (NERPO). The relationship between these groups and the NEAAPM is somewhat unclear, though some members from this time period recall that all three groups co-existed though NEAAPM was not very active at the time. In any case, it is likely that there was a significant overlap in membership. The BMPG is remembered primarily for holding monthly scientific meetings at the MIT faculty club. NERPO was founded as a collaborative venture inspired by an effort by the NE governors to facilitate regional collaboration. NERPO is best remembered for organizing a program of didactic comparisons between Boston area hospitals as well as those in New Hampshire and Maine.

While working as a physicist at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in New Hampshire, Edward (Ted) S. Sternick served on the executive board of NERPO starting in 1971. During the years 1971-1972 the board began to discuss evolving NERPO and the BMPG into the New England Chapter of the AAPM. NEAAPM was ultimately elected to serve as Chairman to the newly reconstituted NEAAPM board for 1974-1975. In addition to Ted as chair, the board consisted of Saul Aronow as secretary/treasurer, Bengt Bjerggaard as AAPM board representative with John Cardarelli and Philip Judy as members at large.

All of these original members ultimately went on to have long distinguished careers in medical physics in the New England region. Ned Sternick left New Hampshire for Boston in 1978 to come to Tufts-New England Medical Center to serve as the Director of the Medical Physics Division. In 1981 the AAPM annual meeting was held in Boston and Ned served as chairman of the local arrangements. He was also elected to serve as AAPM president in 1984.

Bengt Bjerggaard became the Director of Physics and Engineering group at the Joint Center for Radiation Therapy (JCRT) which was established in 1968 to provide radiation oncology services to four of the Harvard Medical School teaching hospitals. Bengt was elected AAPM president in 1979. He would later be appointed a full professor of Radiation Oncology at Harvard Medical School. Bengt recently passed away in January 2014.

One of the tasks before the 1974-1975 NEAAPM board was to update the original constitution. A letter from Ned Sternick to the members dated March 6, 1975 notes the hard work of Faridah Bagn, Joe Blinick, and Ken Wright at revising the constitution to make it more responsive to the professional, scientific, and educational needs of New England physicists. While no surviving copy of the 1975 constitution has been found, one obvious change of the new constitution was to redefine the officers of the board. The post of Chairman was replaced by President and the President-elect was added. The 1976-1977 board consisted of Joseph Blinick as president and Saul Aronow as President Elect. Herb Mower filled the position of secretary/treasurer while Bengt Bjerggaard remained on as national board representative. There is no record of other members-at-large. Other than that and the fact that secretary/treasurer was one position this is similar to the board structure that is used today.

1964 1st NEAAPM Constitution

The NEAAPM Today

As of 2015 the NEAAPM has nearly 300 members. The Chapter holds four major meetings a year of scientific and professional talks. The winter and fall meetings are half day and the summer meeting is a full day. These meetings all feature invited speakers from both inside and outside New England. Our Spring meeting is a young investigators symposium.

NEAAPM Presidents

1974-1975 Edward Sternick
1976-1977 Joseph Blinick
1978-1979 John W. Brownell
1979-1980 Arthur Boyer
1981-1982 Kenneth Kase
1983-1984 Karen Dopke
1984-1985 Robert Zamenhof
1985-1986 William Roventine
1986-1987 Andrew Wuu
1987-1988 Bruce Curran
1988-1989 Lynn Verhey

1979 NEAAPM Young Investigators Symposium

1989-1990 Stephen Moore
1990-1991 Chris Constantino
1991-1992 Frank Audet
1993-1994 Marie Foley Kijewski
1995-1996 Douglas Wagner
1996-1997 Marcia Utke
1997-1998 Martin Fraser
1999-2000 Susan Brahmavur
2000-2001 Paul Imbergamo
2001-2002 Lee Chin
2002-2003 Charles Mayo
2003-2004 Eileen Cinno
2004-2005 Robert Biggs
2005-2006 Douglas Elfaraher
2006-2007 YC Lo
2007-2008 Gene Cardarelli
2008-2009 Robert Cormack
2009-2010 Georges El Fakhri
2010-2011 Frederic Fahy
2011-2012 Joseph Kilitan
2012-2013 Jessica Hatt
2013-2014 David Giorga
2014-2015 Ross Berbeco

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A few of the Physicists from the early days of the NEAAPM

Edward (Ted) Webster
AAPM President 1963-1964

Joseph Blinick
NEAAPM President 1976-1977

Saul Aronow, NEAAPM President 1978-1979, with Prof Gordon Brownell and an early positron brain scanner, MGH, circa 1955

1981 AAPM Annual Meeting: Boston MA

Young Investigator Symposium

2015 NEAAPM Young Investigators Symposium

First “AAPM Fun Run” runners assembled at the start, by the Charles River.

NEAAPM Fellows

Peter Biggs
Joseph Blinick
Sunsin Brahnavur
Thomﺳgertt Bordt
Gene Cardarelli
George TY Chen
Bruce Curran
Karen Dopke
Edward Epp

Frederic Fahy
Martin Fraser
Per Hakonsen
Philip Judy
Andrew Karella
Kenneth Kase
Herbert Mower
Androz Naimoiko
Harald Paganelli

Mark Rivard
William Rivontine
Douglas Shearer
Edward Stennick
Marcia Utke
Robert Zamenhof
Robert Zimmerman
Martin Fraser

2015 NEAAPM Officers

Carla Bradford
President-Elect

Carol Berbeco
President

Jennifer Pursley
Immediate Past President

John Leese
Treasurer

Greg Sharp
Secretary

Paul Imbergamo
Rep. Board Member

Robert Cormack
Coordinating Committee Chair

Martin Fraser

Jessica Hatt
Corporate Membership Coordinator

Joe Kiloran
NEMCA Co-Chair

Robert Cormack
Coordinating Committee Chair

2015 NEAAPM Officers

Acknowledgements and Disclaimer

The historical information presented here on the early days of the NEAAPM was based on a few available documents and the recollections of members. An effort was made to be as accurate as possible, but some minor speculation was necessary to fill in the gaps. Please forgive any errors, particularly those of omission. Anyone with additional information or corrections is encouraged to bring it to the attention of the NEAAPM board. We would, in particular, like to include more photos of former board members.

Special thanks to Phil Judy for locating many old documents, including the 1964 Constitution.

Additional thanks are due to Ned Sternick, who located the 1981 AAPM Photos, as well as Bengt Bjerggaard, Joe Blinick, John & Gene Cardarelli and a number of others who contributed their recollections.

Once again, please forgive us for anyone we’ve forgotten!

The NEAAPM Board – 2015