

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 few of the Physicists from the early days of the NEAAPM



Edward (Ted) Webster
AAPM President 1963-1964



Edward (Ned) S. Sternick
NEAAPM Chairman 1974-1975
AAPM President 1984



Bengt Bjarngard
NEAAPM board Rep 1974-77
AAPM President 1979



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

Scenes from the 1981 AAPM Annual Meeting held in Boston Massachusetts



Suntha Suntharalingam devours a lobster as Faridh Bagne looks on.



Ned Sternick, local arrangements chair, at the awards ceremony with Colin Orton at his right.



Ned makes a few remarks at the right out, an outdoor lobster bake.



The two photos above are from the very first 'AAPM Fun Run', organized by Ned and originally dubbed the 'Up and Atom Phun Run'. On left, runners assemble at the start by the Charles River. On the right, Prof Aarons Norman accepts, in good humor, the award for oldest participant.

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 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 1959 he became a member of the Chair 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. Ellett** 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 master's degree 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. By 1968 William Ellett had left Boston for the Medical Physics Department at the Royal Postgraduate Medical School in London, England where by 1969 he earned a doctoral degree. His specialty appears to have been primarily health physics. After earning his Ph.D. he returned to the U.S. where 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 dosimetric comparisons between Boston area hospitals as well as those in New Hampshire and Maine.

A prominent physicist from this time, **Bengt Bjarngard**, recalls that one reason NERPO was formed was to follow the model of the regional group for radiation oncologists: the New England Society for Radiation Oncologists (NESRO). At the time there was considerable political tension between NESRO and the ACR. Within the physics community, there were also concerns about the political and professional transparency of NEAAPM also due, perhaps in part, to its perceived ties to the ACR. As NESRO did not accept physicists as full members, NERPO was formed.

In the meantime, the BMPG was making changes to better serve the larger region. Monthly meetings with a single speaker at the MIT faculty club were replaced with less frequent but longer sessions to make attendance more worthwhile for those further outside the Boston area. In the early 70s more comprehensive organizational changes began to take place under the leadership of Ned Sternick.

While working as a physicist at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in New Hampshire, **Edward (Ned) 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 NEAAPM. Ned was ultimately elected to serve as Chairman to the new reconstituted NEAAPM board for 1974-1975. In addition to Ned as chair, the board consisted of Saul Aronow as secretary/treasurer, Bengt Bjarngard 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 for the local arrangements. He was also elected to serve as AAPM president in 1984.

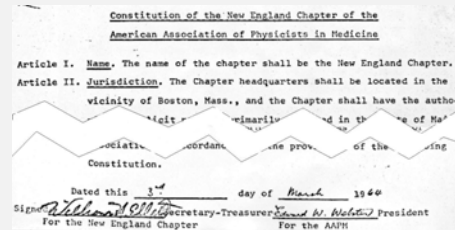
Bengt Bjarngard became the Director of Physics and Engineering group at the Joint Center for Radiation Therapy (JCRT) which was established in 1980 to provide radiation oncology services to four of the Harvard Medical School teaching hospitals. Bengt was elected AAPM president in 1979. He would later be appointed a full Professor of Radiation Oncology at Harvard Medical School.

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 Faridh Bagne, Joe Blinick, and Ken Wright at revising the constitution to make it "more reflective of the professional, scientific and educational needs of New England physicists". He then calls for a meeting, for a full discussion, on March 27 to be held (as usual) at the MIT Faculty Club. Also of historical note, while the letter is on official AAPM New England Chapter letterhead, it refers to the group as the "AAPM-BMPG". Another similar reference on a 1975 symposium announcement is presented as the "New England Chapter in Cooperation with the Boston Medical Physics Group" so the BMPG may still have existed in some form.

While no surviving copy of the 1975 constitution has been found as of yet, 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 position of 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 Bjarngard 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.

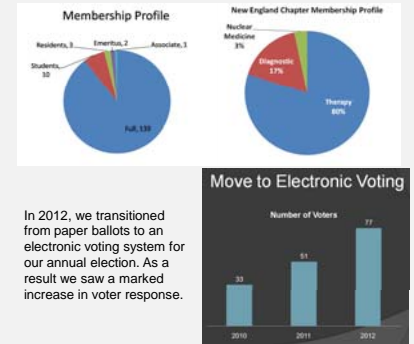
In an undated letter to the membership, NEAAPM president Joe Blinick (76-'77) states that NERPO has officially disbanded leaving New England AAPM as the "only organization in the area to serve the scientific, educational and professional interests of medical physicists". The letter acknowledges the need to master new concepts due to the introduction of technologies such as CT scanners and ultrasound. In addition, it is noted that due to the high cost of postage and reproduction membership dues will be set at \$5 but student membership will continue to be free.

1964 1st NEAAPM Constitution



The NEAAPM Today

As of 2012 the NEAAPM has 284 total members, 247 of which list the NEAAPM as their primary chapter. 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. Some more information about our members, past meetings, and current officers is shown below.



In 2012, we transitioned from paper ballots to an electronic voting system for our annual election. As a result we saw a marked increase in voter response.

2013 NEAAPM Officers



Jessica Hiatt
President



David Gierga
President-Elect



Joseph Kiloran
Immediate Past President



Cindy Hancox
Treasurer



Lindsey Lavoie
Secretary



Desmond O'Farrell
Officer at Large



Paul Imbergamo
Representative Board Member



Martin Fraser
Coordinating Committee Board President 1998



Gene Cardarelli
Corporate Membership President 2008



Peter Biggs
Nominating Committee Chair



Robert Cormack
CAMPEP Coordinator President 2009



Jacek Kukulk
IT Committee Chair

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 Bjarngard, 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 - 2013