

Technologists Plan for Nuclear Medicine's Future

“Technologists now have a better vision of the future of health care and their objectives can be more proactive to move the profession forward.”

The Society of Nuclear Medicine's Technologist Section (SNM-TS) has embarked on an aggressive plan to advance nuclear medicine technology within the health care field. Steps in the plan include positioning nuclear medicine technologists (NMTs) to assume more diverse responsibilities as health care providers and to be well-informed nuclear medicine spokespersons. At the SNM Mid-Winter Meeting this past February, the Technologist Section approved the new strategic plan that will take technologists into the year 2000.

“Among the reasons for the new strategic plan are that we completed many assignments of the previous plan and the health care environment is different than it was three years ago,” said Martha Pickett, CNMT, president of the SNM-TS. Pickett said the technologists now have a better vision of the future of health care and their objectives can be “more proactive to move the profession forward.”

The previous strategic plan, approved in May 1994, focused on organizational restructuring to ensure faster response to changes in the current health care environment, improving communication and collaboration with other health care organizations, establishing a mentoring program to recruit future leadership and providing greater leadership accountability.

The new strategic plan has six objectives. Pickett says that the most critical objective is for the SNM-TS to collaborate with the SNM to attain fiscal viability because it is the foundation upon which all other strategic initiatives ultimately depend.

The other five objectives seek to improve the position of nuclear medicine within the health care field. The technologists plan to educate providers and purchasers about nuclear medicine's unique role, value and cost-effectiveness to make nuclear medicine technology an integral part of health care delivery. Pickett points out that this is a “very big initiative that is beneficial for the entire nuclear medicine industry” and relates well to the Society's new initiatives. This goal sets the groundwork for the remaining four interlinked SNM-TS strategic initiatives to: become a catalyst and a recognized leader in integrating nuclear medicine technology into health care; ensure the competence of NMTs; appeal to a broad spectrum of health care technologies to increase the SNM-TS market share; and identify career pathways to expand professional opportunities in nuclear medicine and related fields.

The new strategic plan evolved naturally from

completion of earlier goals and from grassroots feedback on what the membership wanted. Many SNM-TS committee activities are projects that carry over from one strategic plan into the next, with each new plan providing guidance for a higher level of achievement.

In addition to restructuring, several other important projects from the 1994 SNM-TS strategic plan were completed. The SNM-TS launched the newsletter, *Uptake*, to provide timely communication to the membership in between the quarterly issues of the *Journal of Nuclear Medicine Technology*. Increased communication and collaboration with other health care organizations were achieved, as most exemplified by the Technologist Section's formation of the Health Professions Network (HPN). HPN has been praised by federal officials for providing a liaison between health care organizations and various government entities and commissions, such as the Pew Commission. These efforts not only provide more information for technologists but are raising awareness of nuclear medicine and building the SNM-TS leadership role within the health care field. This increased cooperation with other organizations provides a stronger voice for the SNM-TS on common goals, such as legislative issues.

Continuing education remains a key activity that contributes simultaneously to several of the Technologist Section's goals. Joni Herbst, CNMT, chair of the SNM-TS Continuing Education Committee, says that one of the committee's biggest goals has been to make continuing education more accessible to members. One project, soon to be available, is continuing education articles published on SNM's Internet site. The New Projects Task Force was created as a key subgroup to develop innovative ways to provide continuing education to meet the strategic goal of increasing technologist competence. This group produced the *Emission Tomography Road Show* and is developing a directory of continuing education resources. Both these programs allow technologists to choose from a variety of available resources, with pre-approved VOICE credit to devise their own customized programs. “These programs will provide the same quality of material as in national meetings, but on the local level,” Herbst said. Teleconferencing is a long-term project of large scope that the committee is evaluating. It may be able to provide cutting edge technology programs, more cost effectively, to a larger

(Continued on page 30N)

lic relations staff have been engaged in the larger community-wide IS/I Program whose mission is "to make nuclear medicine an integral part of appropriate patient management." Recently, the SNM leadership redefined the organization's goals, one of which was to "establish SNM as the driving force to integrate nuclear medicine into health care delivery." With these objectives so closely aligned, the SNM Public Relations Committee and staff devised a communications strategy in support of both of these endeavors. The IS/I movement is a harnessing of resources between the SNM, American College of Nuclear Physicians, American Society of Nuclear Cardiology, American College of Nuclear Medicine, the Institute for Clinical PET and the commercial sector. The SNM is working closely with these groups by sharing information and resources for an enhanced promotion of nuclear medicine.

"Everything that SNM public relations is doing directly aligns the new SNM goals while contributing to the objectives and mission of the IS/I. Public relations is playing a major role in moving

the organization along the path to enhanced visibility for and awareness of nuclear medicine. With our own efforts and by working with the IS/I member organizations, the specialty will benefit in the medical marketplace and in the consumers' eyes," said Kristin Ludwig, SNM associate director for marketing and public relations.

SNM Press Kit and Centennial Booklet Win National Recognition

The SNM won two awards in the 1996 *Association Trends* national publications contest: one award for the Annual Meeting press kit (written in lay terms) and a second award for the "Nuclear Medicine: 100 Years in the Making" centennial booklet. Over 400 entries for association magazines, annual reports, press kits and promotional pieces were submitted to *Association Trends* from all over the country. Several hundred communications professionals attended the January 30th awards luncheon at which the winners were presented with plaques and certificates.

Technologists Plan for the Future (Continued from page 24N)

audience.

The goal of ensuring the competence of NMTs is furthered through a project developed by the Socioeconomic Affairs Committee, chaired by Denise Merlino, MBA, FSNM-TS. This committee soon will release the *Developing Employee Assessments and Competencies* booklet that shows how three facilities developed and used their own documentation to measure their employees' competence. This book will help departments prepare to meet Joint Commission for the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations requirements on technologist competency evaluations and documentation.

Increasing membership market share is a step toward the goal of fiscal viability that involves the SNM-TS Membership Committee. This committee is removing barriers to membership by simplifying the membership categories, creating a category for commercial members and making the

membership year coincide with the fiscal year. Kathy Thomas, CNMT, Membership Committee chair and president-elect, says that the SNM-TS "needs to represent people with more diverse needs" and capture the market of multiskilled technologists who are not currently served by any one professional society. There is a potential membership pool of more than 17,000 Nuclear Medicine Technology Certification Board-registered technologists into which the SNM-TS can tap. Current SNM-TS membership is about 7000 members.

Pickett, Herbst, Merlino and Thomas agreed that cooperation between the technologists and the physicians and scientists is necessary for each to learn from the other to achieve the goals necessary to make nuclear medicine an integral part of health care delivery. The technologists' new strategic objectives have much in common with the SNM's new strategic goals. Teamwork can create a synergism strong enough to bring about the changes necessary to ensure the future of nuclear medicine.

—Dawn Murphy

San Antonio (Continued from page 26N)

Exhibits

The exhibit space is larger than last year's. Currently, there are 100 exhibitors, 19 of whom are new exhibitors. One new feature: there will be "human arrows" directing people from outside the convention center. Also, bigger banners and signs will help attendees find their destinations inside the convention center.

As in past years, Wagner will continue his time-honored tradition (20 years and counting) of concluding the meeting with his view of the scientific highlights at the close of the Annual Meeting. Look in the August issue's *Newsline* for Wagner's published account of the scientific research presented at the Annual Meeting. "This year's meeting should be an outstanding combination of science, continuing education and commercial exhibits that we have ever presented," Eckelman said.