



## **UTILIZATION ANALYSIS DATABASE GOES ONLINE**

If there were a mechanism for tracking overall growth in the nuclear medicine field, would you be interested in accessing this information? Could your facility benefit from identifying new trends or declining activity in the nuclear medicine industry? Would you like to compare your facility's utilization of high-volume CPT codes with other nuclear medicine facilities? Could your department benefit from effectively anticipating workloads and maximizing employee efficiency?

If you answered yes to one or more of these questions, then perhaps the Society of Nuclear Medicine's (SNM's) Utilization Analysis Database (UADB) is the solution. According to SNM president James W. Fletcher, MD, "Utilization management is a critical element of health care delivery and the associated requirements of preserving quality while reducing unnecessary costs. This project will provide SNM members with a yardstick for comparing their own practice referral patterns with national and other local patterns."

This new program was premiered at the 1998 SNM Annual Meeting in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. More than 100 U.S. nuclear medicine facilities have enrolled. As more facilities are added, an important database will be developed, providing information that is essential in anticipating workload and rates of use in a given population when dealing with a managed care group contract or considering a proposed capitation model contract.

All nuclear medicine facilities, both hospital and nonhospital, are invited to participate. Each institution should have only one

representative; however, this representative may be a physician, technologist or administrator. There is no cost to participants to either enter data or generate and obtain specific reports.

Participation is easy. The first step is entering demographic data (facility type and location; number of active general medicine and surgical beds; number of outpatient encounters (visits); number of physician, technologist and clerical full-time equivalents; and number of planar, SPECT, PET hybrid gamma cameras and dedicated PET scanners). Facility information will remain strictly confidential and will need revision only if facility demographics change.

Participants then enter, on a quarterly basis, inpatient and outpatient procedure volume data on high-volume nuclear medicine CPT codes, PET and bone density and amplifier codes (if applicable). Participants may then access the UADB online report feature. This feature offers standard reports, charts and graphs that provide valuable comparison data. If a facility does not have Internet access, SNM staff will enter data and provide participant-specific reports.

The program's slogan is "Today's Data for Tomorrow's Solutions." This is an important opportunity. Please participate. Contact SNM and provide the following information: name, facility name, address, phone number, fax number, e-mail address and facilities represented. You may call the UADB project coordinator at (703) 708-9000, ext. 255, or contact Wendy Smith, Director of Health Care Policy, by e-mail at [wsmith@snm.org](mailto:wsmith@snm.org).

## **SNM UNCOVERS CORRECT CODING INITIATIVE ERROR FROM APRIL 1998**

A nuclear medicine physician in Ohio recently reported that he was no longer being paid for CPT codes 78320, Bone and/or joint imaging; tomographic (SPECT), with 78306, Bone and/or joint imaging; whole body, and 78803, Radiopharmaceutical localization of tumor; tomographic (SPECT), with 78802, Radiopharmaceutical localization of tumor; whole body. Current Medicare policy for nuclear medicine is to use the -51 modifier (Multiple Procedures) when a whole-body bone, tumor or infection study is performed on the same day before a SPECT bone, tumor or infection study. Payment will be 100% for the SPECT study and 50% for the whole-body study.

According to Administar Federal, a Medicare carrier that rec-

ommends code edits to the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA), these two Correct Coding Initiative (CCI) code pair edits went into effect April 1, 1998. SNM was not notified of this new policy. Upon investigation, it was determined that both HCFA and Administar Federal agree that these edits should be deleted retroactive to the April 1, 1998, implementation date. Officials at Administar are working to resolve this code edit error and state that the deletions will be reflected in the next scheduled update of the CCI, to be implemented January 1, 1999. All reimbursement and correction of denials will be retroactive to April 1, 1998.

—Wendy J.M. Smith, MPH, is the SNM director of health care policy.

## **PROCEDURE GUIDELINES REAPPROVED BY HOUSE OF DELEGATES**

The Guidelines and Communications Committee of the Commission on Health Care Policy and Practice presented 4 revised procedure guidelines to the SNM House of Delegates for approval at the SNM Annual Meeting in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, in June 1998. The 4 revised guidelines, which had undergone the Committee's prescribed biannual revision process, as follows:

*Hepatobiliary Scintigraphy, C-14 Urea Breath Test, Use of Radiopharmaceuticals and Gallium Scintigraphy in the Evaluation of Malignant Disease.*

The revision process consisted of a review of the SNM procedure guidelines by their original authors for revisions and updates. Changes in procedures were noted. New references were



added and old references deleted, as appropriate. Comments were collated and sent to the guideline's primary author for determination as to which comments should be incorporated into the new version of the guideline. Guidelines that were substantially revised were sent to the SNM Random Sample Review Group, a cross-section of over 100 physicians representing all areas of specialization within nuclear medicine.

Before presentation to the House of Delegates, the revised guidelines were approved unanimously by the Guidelines and Communications Reference Committee, the Commission on Health Care Policy and Practice and the SNM Board of Directors.

The 4 revised guidelines, as well as the 22 remaining SNM-approved guidelines, are available for download free of charge from the SNM web site at [www.snm.org](http://www.snm.org). A comment button was recently added to the SNM Procedure Guidelines page, allowing visitors to the site to submit comments or questions about the guidelines to the Guidelines Committee. The Guidelines Committee welcomes feedback as a means to continue to improve the quality of the procedure guidelines. For further information, contact Marie Davis, SNM procedure guidelines project manager, at (703) 708-9000, ext. 250, or by e-mail at [mdavis@snm.org](mailto:mdavis@snm.org).

*—Marie Davis is the SNM procedure guidelines project manager.*



## Government Relations Update

### NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION ACTIVITY

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) held a briefing with the Advisory Committee for the Medical Uses of Isotopes (ACMUI) on June 17, 1998, to discuss the pending proposed rule for 10 CFR 35. The NRC heard recommendations from the ACMUI on the medical policy statement, significant precursors and patient notification sections of the proposed rule. The ACMUI also asked that the NRC extend the time period for commenting on the proposed rule

from 75 to 120 days.

The NRC was expected to publish for public comment a proposed rule by mid-August 1998. The NRC is also expected to hold three public workshops to hear additional discussions on the proposed changes. These changes include (a) reducing the radiation safety training and experience required for physicians practicing nuclear medicine, (b) revamping the radiation safety committee requirements to focus on a program for radiation safety rather

than a prescriptive committee structure and (c) restructuring the quality management program to require only written directives and a program that ensures that the dose prescribed is the dose given. Other areas of the current 10 CFR 35 also will be changed.

The ACNP/SNM Government Relations Office has the associated document available on the SNM web site. Readers are encouraged to review the material and submit comments.

### PRODUCTION OF RESEARCH ISOTOPES

One of the four goals established by the ACNP/SNM Government Relations Committee in January 1998 was to increase funding for research isotope production through the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). Original requests to the House of Representatives and Senate Energy and Water Appropriations Committees were for a \$20 million increase. This was reduced to a site-specific request of \$10 million. This \$10 million request, although supported by Senators Larry Craig (R-ID), Connie Mack (R-FL), Slade Gorton (R-WA) and Patty Murray (D-WA), was not included in either the House or Senate bills as of July 7, 1998. In addition, the House

bill removed an additional \$6 million slated for the construction of a beam spur of the LANSCE accelerator at Los Alamos National Laboratory, Los Alamos, NM, which would have ensured that that national laboratory could continue to produce research isotopes. The ACNP/SNM Government Relations Office continues to press for the House to include funding for the beam spur during the Energy and Water Appropriations Committee Conference.

ACNP and SNM have nominated Richard C. Reba, MD; Michael D. Devous, PhD; Daniel J. Sullivan, MD; and Linda C. Knight, PhD, to serve on the Nuclear

Energy Research Advisory Committee, which would advise the Director of the Office of Nuclear Energy (currently, Bill Magwood is acting director) on those isotopes that the DOE should expend resources to produce. SNM is also looking at establishing a peer review committee to provide commentary to the DOE on which isotopes it feels the DOE should produce. This type of input from a federal advisory committee and a peer review group within SNM would help the DOE to focus on producing and ranking 5–10 isotopes and making them available to researchers at a reasonable cost year-round.

*—David Nichols is the director of the ACNP/SNM government relations office.*

## Notice to Authors Submitting Materials to *The Journal of Nuclear Medicine*

As of July 1, 1998, the address for articles submitted to *JNM* has changed. Please mail all manuscripts to the following address:

Editor  
*JNM* Office  
Society of Nuclear Medicine  
1850 Samuel Morse Drive  
Reston, VA 20190-5316

Please also note that the *JNM* Instructions for Authors have been revised. See pages 1652–1654 in this issue and the “Publications” section of the SNM web site ([www.snm.org](http://www.snm.org)).

## 1999-2000 FELLOWSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT

### ANNUAL MALLINCKRODT/SNM FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM FOR RESEARCH AND/OR DEVELOPMENT IN NUCLEAR MEDICINE

Mallinckrodt Inc. is pleased to announce the Annual Fellowship of \$20,000 for a physician fellow active in nuclear medicine research and/or development is available for July 1, 1999.

The award is to further a research project involving the development of single-photon radiopharmaceuticals or beta emitters to be used in nuclear medicine oncology. Applicants are asked to submit their curriculum vitae, a detailed account of their research project (including prior accomplishments pertaining to the project), two letters supporting the application and future plans. The fellowship recipient will be announced at the next SNM Annual Meeting, June 1999 in Los Angeles, California. Application deadline: 12/31/98.

For more information and an application contact:  
Society of Nuclear Medicine, SNM Fellowship Committee,  
1850 Samuel Morse Drive, Reston, VA 20190-5316  
Phone: 703-708-9000 Fax: 703-708-9777