Nuclear Medicine Self-Study Program IV: Nuclear Medicine Oncology (Anthology, Topics 1–8)

Thomas P. Haynie, ed.

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There is perhaps no more active topic in continuing medical education today than oncology for nuclear medicine professionals. The availability of a revised syllabus on nuclear medicine oncology from the Society of Nuclear Medicine is indeed a welcome event. In just over 400 pages, it attempts to cover almost all current topics in nuclear medicine oncology. The editorial board that supervised the preparation of this is certainly made up of a great many experts in the field. Individual chapters are attributed to authors, but the assumption is that the editorial board has reviewed a great deal of the material.

The text is structured to present a topic, an extensive list of references on the topic, and a series of questions and answers after that. Annotations explaining the answers are perhaps the strongest feature of the text, in that they help the reader understand better where his or her deficiencies may lie. Numerous illustrations appear throughout the text.

Compiling any textbook or continuing review of materials is a complex undertaking that invariably results in certain omissions. In addition, when updating a previously published document, one must carefully ensure that the most recent information is included. In this regard, there are some issues with this publication.

The presented information is detailed, well explained, well illustrated, and correct. However, more recent developments in the field of nuclear oncology, such as antibody therapy for lymphoma, are given rather short shrift. Although an excellent reference list is provided at the end of each section, many of the references are more than 10 years old and few are more recent than 2000. Some of the techniques discussed are purely of historical interest because the radiopharmaceuticals are no longer clinically available. Although I am wholly in favor of this approach, one should not leave the reader with the impression that the techniques described are routinely clinically available today.

No specific discussion of PET/CT is attempted. Although many of the PET images are correlated with CT scans in the text, the specific topic of PET/CT itself is not addressed. This shortcoming is in part outweighed by the extensive discussion of PET in many disease entities.

One additional shortcoming is the poor quality of many illustrations. In a text on a specialty area in which the image is often considered to be the end result, one should strive for excellent image reproduction. The choice to print images on flat, rather than glossy, paper was undoubtedly due to cost considerations. However, the result is images that are of less than optimal quality in some cases. All images are readable, and all support the point being made in the captions and text. However, not all are of the quality of image currently available.

Where, then, does this text rest in terms of its role in nuclear medicine? There is certainly a significant role for this text in the education of resident physicians and as a reference for practicing physicians. Physicians practicing outside academic medical centers may have yet to encounter many of the techniques described. The scientific underpinning of much of what is happening in nuclear medicine today is well handled. Individuals who cannot routinely attend national meetings will find this text a vital primer in nuclear oncology. The additional feature of continuing education credits should make the book attractive to many in nuclear medicine.

This text should be in the library of all residency programs for both radiology and nuclear medicine, as well as available to practicing clinicians. The reasonable price quoted in the Society's catalog for this volume, $45 for members, makes it a further attractive addition to any departmental library.

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