Focusing on Molecular Imaging

Molecular imaging is poised to dominate all imaging modalities and influence the daily practice of medicine—eventually leading to improved patient care, from diagnosis through therapy. Because SNM leaders recognize this, the society has developed a focused approach to promote the research, education, and applications of molecular imaging—one that benefits members, the nuclear and molecular imaging community, and, most important, current and future patients. Increasingly, you will see molecular imaging infused into our programs, discussions, activities, and collaborations.

The establishment of our Molecular Imaging Center of Excellence (COE) has underscored the society's seriousness of purpose in preparing the imaging community for the future. Utilizing input from molecular imaging experts in all disciplines, the Molecular Imaging COE is building an educational program designed for radiologists and nuclear medicine physicians; oncologists; cardiologists; other physician specialists; basic scientists; trainees such as residents, fellows, and graduate students; and technologists interested in molecular imaging. The center will address topics such as surrogate markers, drug development, targeted diagnosis, therapies, and training.

The center, which successfully presented its first educational program at SNM's 52nd Annual Meeting in Toronto in June, hopes to foster research and seek funding for molecular imaging; disseminate educational materials; address regulatory issues surrounding the use of radiopharmaceuticals and related agents in clinical imaging procedures; organize SNM-sponsored symposia and workshops, including conjoint events with other professional organizations; develop a core curriculum for, and conduct SNM Learning Center courses in, molecular imaging; and provide a platform for exchange of knowledge, including a Web-based information center.

Members of the center's board of directors include many prominent innovators in molecular imaging: SNM 2004–05 President Mathew L. Thakur, PhD (president); Sanjiv Sam Gambhir, MD, PhD (vice president); Henry VanBrocklin, PhD (secretary/treasurer); Simon R. Cherry, PhD; Thomas J. Meade, PhD; and Michael J. Welch, PhD. Center officers also intend to work with industry representatives to identify opportunities for cooperative programs in education and research in the field of molecular imaging.

The publication of the "Joint SNM/RSNA Molecular Imaging Summit Statement" in the September issue of *The Journal of Nuclear Medicine* was the culmination of a pivotal meeting of key leaders in molecular and functional imaging, nuclear medicine, radiology, and engineering who met last spring to examine the evolution, impact, and future direction of molecular imaging. SNM and the Radiological Society of North America, a professional radiology association dedicated to science and education, organized a 2-day Molecular Imaging Summit that brought together physicians, scientists, and staff from many societies to begin long-term collaboration in areas of mutual interest.

Virginia Pappas, CAE
SNM Chief Executive Officer

The joint statement, issued by summit co-chairs Thakur and RSNA 2004 President Brian C. Lentle, MD, provides this definition of molecular imaging: "MI techniques directly or indirectly monitor and record the spatiotemporal distribution of molecular or cellular processes for biochemical, biologic, diagnostic, or therapeutic applications."

The statement, which notes that education programs for radiologists and nuclear medicine professionals should include subjects such as molecular biology, genomics, and gene therapy, also advises that scientists, medical professionals, referring physicians, and consumers should be educated about the potential benefits of molecular imaging.

SNM will explore corporate connectivity during a 2006 Industry Molecular Imaging Summit, where business and SNM leaders will discuss basic research, clinical issues, instrumentation, drug discovery, and government relations/regulatory issues. Members of SNM's Molecular Imaging COE will use the information coming out of the summit to create topical activities and educational programs. A position paper may be developed and published in *The Journal of Nuclear Medicine.*

These actions all articulate a strategic objective of harnessing "the power of molecular imaging and molecular therapeutics in search of better and more effective means to manage diseases and improve the quality of life for patients." For more information about the Molecular Imaging COE, please go online to www.snm.org/MICE. Membership in the Molecular Imaging COE is open to SNM members and nonmembers. Trainees in molecular imaging (residents, fellows, and graduate students) with letters of support from faculty mentors are eligible for a free, 2-year SNM and Molecular Imaging COE trial membership.