



National Oncologic PET Registry Opens

The National Oncologic PET Registry (NOPR), a landmark project intended to expand coverage for PET imaging in a broad range of cancer indications, began accepting patient entries on May 8. The registry is a national, Internet-based, audited data repository designed to gather PET data from beneficiaries and providers and to report on that data. More than 600 PET facilities nationwide have already registered to take part in NOPR and can now be reimbursed by CMS for PET indications currently not covered for payment. Data from NOPR and associated research projects will allow better assessment of the impact of PET on the management of patients with various forms of cancer or suspected cancer.

The last step in the sometimes challenging preparations to launch the registry was American College of Radiology (ACR) Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of a modified project plan. Although the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced in February a final agreement with the NOPR to collect data on oncologic PET scans in expanded coverage areas as part of an effort to support permanent coverage decisions, subsequent changes to the agreement were needed. The major change to the original project design was clarification that the research in which the NOPR entity will be engaged is not considered exempt from IRB approval. However, PET centers and referring physicians working through the registry are not considered to be engaged in the NOPR research and do not need separate IRB approval.

The new project design requires both patients and referring physicians to indicate their willingness to participate in the research component of the NOPR, although written informed con-

sent is not needed. Should either the patient or referring physician choose not to participate in the NOPR research, the information pertaining to that specific patient's PET scan will be excluded from the research database. Refusal of either the patient or referring physician to participate in the NOPR research will not affect CMS reimbursement for the PET scan. As originally planned, CMS reimbursement for PET scans covered by the NOPR is based upon receipt of the required information from the referring physician within the designated timeframe.

NOPR is sponsored by the Academy of Molecular Imaging and managed by ACR and the ACR Imaging Network. Since the original announcement of plans for the registry in January 2005, SNM representatives have assisted in developing the registry. "The launching of this registry is a milestone for cancer patients," said SNM President Peter S. Conti, professor of radiology, clinical pharmacy, and biomedical engineering at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles. "SNM continues to work collaboratively with our colleagues from different associations to advance patient care. PET advances will continue to provide new dimensions in imaging cancer as the medical community integrates advances made in molecular and cellular biology, chemistry, physics, pharmacology, engineering, and computer sciences."

The launch of the registry was accompanied by a Web cast at which NOPR staff and CMS representatives answered questions from physicians and others interested in participation. To learn more about the registry, view an orientation slide set, download forms and other materials for registration, and follow the accrual of patients in different disease categories, visit www.cancerpetregistry.org.

Brookhaven and Mt. Sinai Join in Translational Research

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Brookhaven National Laboratory and the Mount Sinai School of Medicine (MSSM) announced on April 5 an agreement to establish a Joint Center for Translational Biomedical Imaging. Building on earlier Brookhaven/MSSM collaborations using radiotracers and brain-imaging techniques, including PET, to investigate the biological bases of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and substance abuse, this formalized agreement will foster more robust research collaborations investigating these and other conditions, including Alzheimer's disease and depression.

The Brookhaven Lab's world-class medical-imaging scientists will benefit from collaboration with the medical school, where research professionals can help identify new molecular targets for radiotracer development and provide access to a broad base of patient populations. The agreement also establishes a mechanism for joint appointments for Brookhaven scientists and for mentoring of Mount Sinai graduate students. Mount Sinai researchers will gain access to Brookhaven's sophisticated imaging tools, expertise in radiotracer chemistry, and specialized facilities for the development of new tracer molecules.

"This agreement draws on the complementary strengths of our 2 institutions," said Fritz Henn, Brookhaven Lab's new Associate Laboratory Director for Life Sciences. "Our hope is that this center will foster innovations in radiotracer development and imaging techniques that can be translated to improvements in the understanding, diagnosis, and treatment of disease, as well as advances in drug research and development." Dr. Dennis Charney,
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Dean of Academic and Scientific Affairs for MSSM and Senior Vice President for Health Sciences for Mount Sinai Medical Center said, "In addition to pursuing the research interests we already share with our Brookhaven colleagues, Mount Sinai scientists will likely identify new medical problems where imaging can play a role. Our medical expertise and experience in clinical studies will also be a great asset when trying to translate and apply Brookhaven's capabilities and developments in imaging to clinical studies of disease and behavior disorders in patients."

Under the agreement, Brookhaven Lab scientists will continue to initiate and lead their own research programs, as well as operate, maintain, and advance the core imaging facilities, associated technical staff, and components of the clinical infrastructure. This novel integration of physical and life sciences has led to a variety of advances in radiopharmaceuticals and nuclear medicine instrumentation and will continue to be funded by the Office of Biological and Environmental Research within the DOE Office of Science and by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). In the start-up phase of the collaboration, a core group of scientists from the 2 institutions will conduct pilot studies to demonstrate the value of the program and to provide preliminary data. These data will then be used to apply for joint MSSM/Brookhaven research grants from funding agencies such as NIH. All NIH grants for joint research conducted by the center would be awarded to and administered by MSSM.

U.S. Department of Energy

SNMTS Offers Grants for NM Practitioner Program: June 15 Deadline for Applicants

The SNM Technologist Section (SNMTS) announced on April 17 that 2 new competitive grants aimed at encouraging the launch of advanced practice degree programs are being

awarded by the SNMTS Professional Development and Education Fund (PDEF). The 2 12-month \$20,000 Nuclear Medicine Practitioner Program grants will be awarded by the PDEF, with support from members of the SNMTS Corporate Friends program, including Biogen Idec, Bristol Myers-Squibb, Capintec Inc., GE Healthcare, Mallinckrodt Inc., and MDS Nordion.

"SNMTS is proud to announce the creation of these new grants, which will help universities, colleges and related institutions launch new master's degree-level programs for imaging specialists," said SNMTS President Valerie R. Cronin. "Developing this new level of health care provider will have a tremendous impact on the field of imaging specialists," she said, adding that programs could be available as early as the 2007 fall term. The SNMTS recently evaluated the need for an advanced degree for nuclear medicine technologists in clinical practice. As the profession has matured, technologists have taken on roles in the clinical setting that are considered beyond the standard practice domain.

"A nuclear medicine practitioner would be able to provide a broad range of services under the supervision of a physician in a variety of settings," explained Martha W. Pickett, chair of the SNMTS Advanced Practice Task Force. "This new clinical role offers an opportunity for significant career advancement for technologists."

The deadline for completion and filing of the electronic application is June 15. Additional information and the application can be found at www.snm.org/grants. Eligible applicants are representatives from U.S. colleges or universities or consortia of institutions. Recipients will be announced in August. For more information about these grants, contact Kathy Bates, SNM director of development, at kbates@snm.org.

*Society of Nuclear Medicine
Technologist Section*

Charting the Progress of Medical Imaging

The benefits and increasing utility of medical imaging in diagnosing and

treating cancer were the focus of an April 5 briefing on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, sponsored by the National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA) and U.S. Oncology. The event was moderated by Representative Mike Rogers (R-MI), chair of the House of Representatives Cancer Care Working Group. "A comprehensive approach to cancer diagnosis and treatment has a tremendous impact on patients across the entire nation," said Rogers. "With emerging research continually pointing to imaging as a crucial part of that care continuum, ensuring that all Americans can access quality imaging services is absolutely essential."

A white paper, *Medical Imaging in Cancer Care: Charting the Progress*, was released at the event. It surveys recent innovations in imaging and the direct results of those innovations in cancer diagnosis and treatment. Among the benefits discussed at the briefing were: less invasive diagnosis and treatment, more effective management approaches, increased efficiencies and savings in cancer care, and resulting increased worker productivity.

Joe Hogan, president and CEO of GE Healthcare, spoke on behalf of NEMA, calling imaging one of the single most important technologies ever invented. "I'm proud to say that imaging devices have contributed dramatically to the improvement in cancer care, advancements such as combined PET/CT imaging allow physicians to see cancer earlier, localize and personalize treatment, and carefully monitor that treatment," he said.

Also released at the briefing were a timeline highlighting advances in medical imaging and cancer care since 1950 and a series of fact sheets, including descriptions of imaging modalities, recent cancer statistics, a glossary of cancer terms, and case studies. For copies of the white paper and these additional materials, visit www.medicalimaging.org.

*National Electrical
Manufacturers Association
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