

**COMMENTARY**

**LINES FROM THE PRESIDENT**

When this issue of *Newsline* is published, I will be handing over the presidential gavel to Dr. Stanley Goldsmith. I guarantee that he will have an interesting but busy year. It should be obvious from my previous columns that the issue requiring most of my time, and the time of the Executive Committee and the Board of Trustees, is the petition submitted to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) by the American College of Cardiology (ACC) requesting reduced training requirements for nuclear cardiologists.

On May 3, I testified on behalf of The Society of Nuclear Medicine before the NRC's Advisory Committee on the Medical Uses of Isotopes (ACMUI) during its meeting to discuss training and experience criteria for physician users of isotopes. Testimony was also given by: Dr. Lawrence Muroff on behalf of the American College of Radiology (ACR); Dr. James Christie on behalf of the American Board of Radiology (ABR); Dr. Robert Schlant on behalf of the ACC; Dr. George Beller on behalf of the American Heart Association (AHA); Dr. William Blahd on behalf of the American Board of Nuclear Medicine (ABNM); Dr. Robert Garcia on behalf of the American College of Nuclear Medicine (ACNM); and Dr. Jose Martinez on behalf of the American College of Nuclear Physicians (ACNP). Several nuclear cardiologists also presented testimony.

The ACR and ABR were in support of uniform training criteria for all physicians using radioisotopes. The ACC and AHA stated that physicians practicing solely in nuclear cardiology could obtain the necessary training in a time period of four months. The ABNM and ACNM took a stand on the current six-month training requirement, and stated that it should not be altered under any circumstances.

The Society and ACNP testified that four months of training would be satisfactory for physicians practicing solely in nuclear cardiology, and that six months of training should still be required for the general practice of nuclear medicine.

I pointed out that the Society believes that altering the regulations affecting general nuclear medicine, especially when they have only been in effect for a few months, may be perceived by the public as unsafe. The Society acknowledged, however, that the NRC has for some time been able to grant exemptions from current regulations. Since the physician who solely practices cardiovascular nuclear medicine works with—and will always work with—fewer radiopharmaceuticals than the nuclear medicine physician who studies all organs, the Society decided that it seemed logical that the training necessary to ensure safe handling of radioactive materials could be less for nuclear cardiologists than for physicians performing all organ studies.

The ACMUI did not reach a consensus during this meeting, and the NRC staff will prepare a position statement to be published in the *Federal Register* later this year. In my opinion, this matter will be one of the major topics of concern during Dr. Goldsmith's year in office.

One important development occurred since my last Commentary column. A lease has been signed for the new SNM Central Office at 136 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, and the staff will move to that location this summer. I would like to thank Henry Ernstthal, SNM executive director, and Jean Melden, director of administration, and their staff for their efforts in helping the Society find new office space (not an easy chore in New York City).

Finally, I would like to thank the many people who have helped me during my year as President, including the SNM Central Office staff, the Executive Committee, the committee chairmen, and the Board of Trustees. In particular, I would like to thank: Mr. Ernstthal and Virginia Pappas, director of leadership and membership, for their continual help; Dr. Phil Alderson, who did a fantastic job as scientific program chairman; and Dr. Goldsmith.

During this year I have also become even more aware of the dedication and superb efforts of the individuals in charge of our financial activities. Dr. Edward Staab, our treasurer, and Dr. Martin Nusynowitz, chairman of the Finance Committee, spend long hours to ensure the financial health of the Society.

I have had an educational and hectic year, and I would like to thank the members for their support.

—Michael J. Welch, PhD
President
The Society of Nuclear Medicine