
NEWS BRIEFS

Philips and Picker Merger Plan Dropped

In an unexpected development, N.V. Philips' Gloeilampenfabrieken of the Netherlands and the General Electric Co., p.l.c. of the United Kingdom have ended talks to merge their medical systems activities. The negotiations were aimed at combining Philips' Medical Systems Division and GEC's subsidiary, Picker International, and the operation would have been based in the greater New York area.

The parties said they were unable to come to mutually agreeable financial terms, in part because of fluctuations in the exchange rate of the United States dollar. ■

NCI Studies Cancer Near US Nuclear Plants

The National Cancer Institute (NCI), a division of the federally funded National Institutes of Health (NIH), has begun to study cancer deaths in the vicinity of more than 100 nuclear power reactors in the United States.

According to the NCI, the study was initiated because of public health concerns stemming from a study of areas around nuclear installations in Great Britain. That study, which was published in the British journal *Nature* last October, showed a higher than normal incidence of cancer deaths from childhood leukemia of the lymphatic type around nuclear installations in Britain.

Staff scientists with the NCI are using county mortality records to evaluate any changes that may have taken place in mortality rates from all types of cancer since the individual nuclear reactors began operation.

The study will control for socioeconomic conditions and the presence of chemical plants in the area.

Initially the study will be confined to the county in which each reactor is located. It will include most major reactors that operated for any substantial period of time, and a few major research reactors that will be selected at a later date. The NCI expects to complete the study within 18 months.

[For further information, contact the Office of Cancer Communications, Building 31, Room 10A21, National Cancer Institute, Bethesda, Maryland 20205 (301)496-6641.] ■

WHO to Study Quality Control In Cardiac Imaging

The World Health Organization (WHO), Geneva, Switzerland, has initiated a study to assess quality control and quality assurance in nuclear medicine departments around the world.

This study will be the third WHO effort in nuclear medicine involving Nilo Herrera, MD, chairman of the department of laboratory medicine and nuclear medicine at Danbury Hospital in Danbury, Connecticut, and a member of the committee responsible for quality control for the College of American Pathologists. Countries throughout Eastern and Western Europe, including China and the Soviet Union, as well as developing nations in Latin America and elsewhere, are expected to participate in the study.

Dr. Guennadi N. Souchkevitch of the Soviet Union and medical radiation officer with WHO visited the

hospital in February to meet with Dr. Herrera and to purchase 17 transmission cardiac phantoms for use in the research. The dynamic cardiac phantom, known as the Danbury Heart, was developed and tested at Danbury Hospital by Dr. Herrera, Thomas Crucitti, CNMT, former chief technologist of nuclear medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital in Hartford, Connecticut, and Keith Bigham, president of Medical Designs Inc., the phantom's Danbury-based manufacturer. ■

Two BNL Chemists Win Esselen Award For PET Research

Alfred P. Wolf, PhD, and Joanna S. Fowler, PhD, chemists at Brookhaven National Laboratory (BNL), Upton, New York, are winners of the 1988 Gustavus John Esselen Award for Chemistry in the Public Interest. They will share the award, which consists of \$5,000 and the Esselen Medal. The award is given annually by the Northeastern Section of the American Chemical Society.

Drs. Wolf and Fowler are well-known for their pioneering work on positron emission tomography (PET). Currently their research is focused on brain tumors and mental disorders such as schizophrenia, Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's disease.

The Esselen Award recognizes chemists whose scientific and technical work has contributed to the public well-being. It is a memorial to Gustavus John Esselen, PhD, who, among other accomplishments, developed poly vinylbutyral, an improved material for safety glass. ■