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### The ART of PET

*I think that I shall never see a poem as lovely  
as a PET scan with FDG.*

F. Mand

While a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, names are important. They conjure feelings and help define projects or processes. Problems occur, however, when acronyms are used as names.

Several years ago, when trying to develop the name for a computer to do image analysis, T.K. Natarajan suggested the system be named with an acronym for Scan Analysis and Display, SAD. Dr. Henry Wagner was concerned that the negative connotation of SAD would turn users off to the machine. He suggested naming the system Image Display and Analysis, IDA. Substituting the name of a lady for that of a negative feeling probably helped gain acceptance for the system.

Names are also meant to inform. While art and literature have nomenclature to describe feelings, scientific words are intended for precision. Myocardial perfusion imaging is a mouthful, but the listener understands the nature of the information provided by the test. A bone scan does not describe the process but clearly identifies the organ. The Humungotron, the original name for a rotating gamma camera designed for SPECT, conjured up an accurate image of the device used to record the data. The current term for the process of single-photon tomography, SPECT, identifies the kind of photons that are imaged in a fashion that permits transaxial tomographic reconstruction.

What about PET? While it is a very 'neat' name, it is misleading. Calling the field positron tomography leads to confusion among neophytes in the field, since positrons are not imaged. In keeping with the single-photon approach, perhaps naming the field for the radiation that is detected would help. Since annihilation radiation is detected, a better name for this type of imaging would be ART (Annihilation Radiation Tomography). The appellation maintains the succinct nature of the name while providing more information for the listener.

Naming conventions are gaining in importance as the complexity of measurements increase. We should establish criteria for the development of new terms that allow the inventor/discoverer some latitude, but follow guidelines that permit an orderly progression as new processes are developed. Certainly, physicists have seen the light: progressing through mundane terms for elementary particles like proton, neutron, and electron to novel classes like baryons and leptons, and imbuing these particles with special properties such as charm and beauty. Perhaps it's also about time that we in nuclear medicine learn to scintillate on a new wavelength.

H. William Strauss

*Editor, The Journal of Nuclear Medicine*