

COMMENTARY

LINES FROM THE PRESIDENT

THIS IS MY FIRST OPPORTUNITY SINCE ASSUMING the presidency of The Society of Nuclear Medicine to present my observations and plans for



Paul H. Murphy, PhD

this coming year. First some observations. Our 39th Annual Meeting in Los Angeles was a resounding success. Despite the concerns following the disturbances there, the attendance was a record. More importantly, the quantity and quality of the teaching and scientific presentations were at an all time high. We express our congratulations and appreciation to John Keyes, MD and his program committee for a job well done. Having been in that

position not too long ago, I know how much work and worry are involved. Besides the preplanning program there were many exciting events and decisions that come out of the meeting. The Society was the grateful recipient of two new multi-year fellowships from Medi-Physics/Amersham and DuPont Merck. These will be in the specialties of radiation therapy with unsealed sources and cardiovascular nuclear medicine. These two new fellowships augment others and emphasize the important contributions that industry adds to the advancement of our educational and research objectives. Education, research, and the advancement of the clinical practice of nuclear medicine are the primary goals of our organization.

Most often the activities of the president and executive committee seem to be almost exclusively focused on the fourth objective of the society, socio-economic affairs. This is an unfortunate necessity of the practice of nuclear medicine today. If we don't aggressively address this area in concert with our colleagues in the American College of Nuclear Physicians we will not have the pleasure of participating in the science, teaching and practice of our specialty. To this end, several important decisions or actions were finalized in Los Angeles.

Central Office Relocation

The Board of Trustees approved by a wide margin the recommendation of the business advisers' committee to relocate the central office to the Washington, DC area. The decision to relocate was prompted by the coming expiration of our lease at 136 Madison Avenue in July 1995. The space in New York is larger than we need and we have had difficulty maintaining a sublease. This coupled with the high cost and the unwilling-

ness of the owner to renegotiate the lease made it necessary to move by 1995. Since any move will be expensive and the costs in New York are high, the incremental cost of moving out of New York was weighed, other cities considered, and compared to New York and to our goals and objectives as an organization. Support of our goals in education and research was considered a dominant factor. I have appointed a special committee on relocation to define the desired characteristics of the new site and gather data to permit a decision on a narrower geographic location. We have adequate time to carry out an orderly transition. A key objective will be the retention of as many of our current staff as possible.

Promoting Clinical SPECT

The ACNP this past year brought fourth a proposal for a special project on SPECT. The intent is to document the extent of use, clinical value, and cost effectiveness of single photon tomography. The College requested the endorsement and participation of the Society, and that was granted by the Board. It will be entirely funded by industry and managed from the Joint Government Relations Office in Washington. Requests for proposals are solicited and a steering committee with members from industry, the Society and the College will administer the program and set priorities. I expect the Society's Office of Health Care Policy to be an active participant in this endeavor to scientifically document the rightful place of SPECT in patient care and its proper reimbursement.

Strategic Planning Underway

Over this past year under the leadership of past-president Leon Malmud, MD, Barbara Croft, PhD chaired a Strategic Planning Task Group that scrutinized our internal and external environments. This process has resulted in a document describing the vision, mission, and goals of our organization. Each goal has specific objectives, and there is a defined mechanism for an annual evaluation of our strategic plan and its application. I consider it my responsibility to develop specific strategies to accomplish as many of the planned objectives as possible. We will analyze the organization of the Society in the context of the strategic plan. This process has already begun. I intend to initiate a fall executive committee meeting that this year will focus on the structure of the Society and the responsibilities of the elected leadership. In subsequent years I propose that the fall meeting be used as the forum for reviewing the strategic plan. The executive committee review could then go to the Board of Trustees at the winter meeting and give direction to the finance commit-

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NEWS BRIEFS

court to direct DHS to issue an immediate licensing decision based on the comprehensive administrative record that has been compiled on the Ward Valley site," according to Robert Carretta, MD, a nuclear physician at Roseville Community Hospital in California and spokesman for SNM and ACNP on the Ward Valley issue.

Nuclear industry and biomedical groups have joined in opposition to California's decision to hold adjudicatory hearings. The California Radioactive Materials Management Forum, an industry group representing producers of radioactive waste, and the National Association of Cancer Patients plan to file separate lawsuits against the state. The State of Arizona and the San Diego Biomedical Industry Council filed briefs urging a speedy answer to the licensing decision. Arizona is a member with California, North Dakota, and South Dakota of the Southwestern Compact for which California agreed to provide disposal capacity for low-level radioactive waste over the next 30 years.

Like all other states, California is required by law to establish disposal capacity for low-level radioactive waste by January 1, 1993. After this date, the nation's only existing disposal sites in

Nevada, South Carolina, and Washington can legally refuse low-level radioactive waste from out-of-state. Already it is apparent that no new waste sites will be ready by the 1993 deadline. Hospitals, biomedical researchers, and other producers of low-level waste are bracing for extremely limited capacity and exorbitant fees for getting rid of radioactive waste.

Efforts in California to establish a waste repository were among those nearest to completion, although the process is now stalled by political opposition. In December 1991, California's Department of Health Services informed US Ecology that sufficient information had been received to reach a licensing decision on the facility proposed for Ward Valley. But the following April, California's Health and Welfare Agency agreed to hold adjudicatory hearings before issuing a license for the facility.

The lawsuits allege that the California Senate Rules Committee pressured Health and Welfare Secretary Russell Gould to agree to adjudicatory hearings by holding up his confirmation and that of Health Services Director Dr. Molly J. Coye. Mr. Gould and Dr. Coye are named as defendants in the lawsuits.

US Ecology, SNM, and ACNP main-

tain that adjudicatory hearings are unnecessary and will benefit only the anti-nuclear activists who they say want to halt the development of the Ward Valley site. "The scientific issues have all been addressed in the license application and there has been more than ample time for public hearings," says Dr. Carretta.

The Sacramento Bee reported in June that project opponents planning to participate in the adjudicatory hearing process would be financed by a \$300,000 appropriation in the state's budget. Political commentator Dan Walters wrote that the allotment of taxpayer dollars was "slipped into the state's budget" by Senate President Pro Temp David Roberti, chairman of the Rules committee, and Senator Herschel Rosenthal.

If the court decides to direct the state to issue a prompt licensing decision, two bills pending in the California legislature could render a judicial ruling moot. One bill would transfer authority over radioactive waste facilities from the Department of Health Services to the State Environmental Protection Agency, which Dr. Carretta says would set back the efforts of the Southwest Compact by at least eight years. The other legislation would make adjudicatory hearings a stipulation for licensing the site. ■

President

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tee in the spring for the formulation of our budget.

As an organization we have four fundamental objectives: education, research, the advancement of clinical practice, and socio-economic affairs. We do, and have to my recollection, always done an excellent job in our educational and research activities, exemplified by our annual meeting and *The Journal of Nuclear Medicine* and *Journal of Nuclear Medicine Technology*. With the formation of the Office of Health Care Policy within the Society and the capable, productive staff in the Joint Government Relations Office in Washington, DC, we have maintained a presence and held our own in the regulatory, legislative, and socio-economic areas. However, the challenges

continue to increase and additional efforts must be expended if we are to maintain the integrity of the specialty. We are the largest organization representing the clinical specialty of nuclear medicine in the world and with that comes the responsibility to sustain our field. With the continued cooperation and support of the ACNP, I am optimistic that we will continue to prevail.

These are exciting times in the field of nuclear medicine and especially in The Society of Nuclear Medicine. I thank you for your confidence in allowing me to serve as President.

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