



**O**UR ANNUAL MEETING, this year in Toronto, marks the end, and the beginning, of another Society year and the changing of the guard. This year has passed swiftly for me; very busy at times, sometimes frustrating but also satisfying. The satisfaction comes from working with so many members of the Society of Nuclear Medicine on issues that are important to our future as an organization and a medical specialty.

This will be our fortieth annual meeting. Often fortieth birthdays are met with dread, suggesting middle age and the loss of vibrant youth. But as medical specialty societies go, we are still vigorous and growing. What other specialty do you know of that has the constant change in instruments, imaging and therapy agents, and clinical protocols that we have? It's a challenge to keep up with it all, but such a pleasure. If only this evolution could transpire free of unnecessary regulations, turf conflicts, and reimbursement fears.

As we confront our specialty's maturation toward "middle age", we must brace ourselves to prevail over new and recurring challenges.

#### **Working with the Government**

Moving our central office to Washington, DC, will present us with expanded opportunities to collaborate with the American College of Nuclear Physicians and our Joint Government Relations Office to understand and respond to the unpredictable moves of the executive, legislative, and regulatory arms of the federal government.

Although in forty years the Society has grown tremendously and helped accomplish medical triumphs, we are still a small player on the arena of health care politics. We need to take advantage of every opportunity to promote the appropriate recognition of nuclear medicine by the new President's Administration, the Congress, and the public.

Both the Society and the College have recognized the need for a strong, unified presence in legislative and regulatory arenas and are pleased with how much we have been able to accomplish through our collaborative effort. The need for government relations activity by organized nuclear medicine has increased steadily and no doubt will continue to increase, particularly with the current focus on health care reform.

Both organizations, however, recognize that it is appropriate

## LINES FROM THE PRESIDENT

and timely to review the goals and funding of the Joint Office on a regular basis to maximize our impact within the constraints of the budget. As part of this review process, the ACNP at its February meeting considered the need to constrain the growth of its financial support for government relations. We together will have to prioritize more closely our efforts with the ACNP through the Joint Office and possibly take on other activities on our own, such as promoting the establishment of a National Biomedical Tracer Facility. We cannot shirk these responsibilities. Who else will stand up for nuclear medicine?

The planning for the move to the Washington area is proceeding on schedule. Through financial analyses, we will be well informed in deciding whether to rent or buy office space. Due to sound fiscal management over the past decade, we have sufficient assets to make buying an option. Potential locations have been narrowed to Alexandria, Virginia and the Bethesda-Rockville corridor of Maryland. Both areas are a few stops by Metro train from downtown Washington.

Quite appropriately, I think, our fortieth annual meeting takes place in Canada. We need to remind ourselves occasionally that we are more than just a U.S. medical society, but primarily a North American society with members from around the world. The first annual meeting of the Society was May 1954 in Seattle. The program consisted of no more than a dozen papers and about 100 physicians and scientists showed up. For this year's meeting, investigators submitted over 2000 abstracts, companies have signed up to fill 71,000 square feet of exhibit space, and attendance is likely to set a new record at over 7600.

#### **The Strength of Origins**

In describing the first annual meeting in his *Chronology of Nuclear Medicine* (Heritage Publications, 1990), Marshall Brucer, MD noted that half of the presentations described therapeutic applications of radioactivity. Nuclear medicine, he wrote, was synonymous with therapy. We have recently, and will hear in Toronto, an increased emphasis on therapy with unsealed sources, as if the specialty were drawing upon the strength of its origins.

I have been honored to serve as the president of The Society of Nuclear Medicine. I look forward to personally thanking many of you in Toronto for assisting me this past year. We have a bright future and outstanding new leadership, headed by Richard Reba, MD, to whom I commit my support and best wishes.

*Paul H. Murphy, PhD*