

## PROMINENT NUCLEAR MEDICINE PHYSICIAN FROM THE U.S. VISITS SOUTH AFRICA



**From left to right: Professor Serafini, University of Miami School of Medicine, Miami, FL; Professor Mdaka, chairman of nuclear medicine, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa; Professor Meyer, physiology and nuclear medicine department, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa.**

Aldo N. Serafini, MD, professor of radiology and medicine at the University of Miami School of Medicine in Miami, FL, was recently invited to lecture at two universities in South Africa: the

University of Witwatersrand Medical School in Johannesburg, where Serafini spoke on receptor imaging with peptides, and the University of Pretoria, where he spoke on new agents in nuclear oncology.

Since the restructuring of South Africa's healthcare system— which mandates a greater emphasis on delivering primary care to the general population— healthcare planners are faced with a challenge: ensuring that this is done expeditiously while maintaining

both the excellent tertiary healthcare and academic infrastructure already established in South Africa, said Serafini.

Over the next decade, the challenge of nuclear medicine in South Africa is to maintain the high level of medical sophistication while redistributing its resources to include nuclear medicine in the primary care setting. Many nuclear physicians in South Africa feel that nuclear medicine could expedite decision making and reduce costs, thereby allowing money to be earmarked for basic primary care needs, such as, sanitation, nutrition, infant mortality, infectious diseases and other community health services.

Over his week-long stay, Serafini visited the new nuclear medicine unit at the Baragwanath Hospital, which is one of the largest hospitals in South Africa. Additionally, Serafini met Professor Trevor Mdaka, the newly appointed head of the nuclear medicine department at the University of Pretoria. Serafini points out that Mdaka's appointment was a milestone in South Africa's medical history because he is the first black to chair the nuclear medicine department.

Serafini also visited the Safari Reactor at Pelindaba, the leading facility in South Africa, which has a specially designed facility for the manufacture of medical radioisotopes. The facility is managed by the Atomic Energy Corporation of South Africa, which distributes a wide variety of generators and radiopharmaceuticals throughout the world to such countries as China, Africa and the United States.



## GOVERNMENT RELATIONS OFFICE MOVES FORWARD FULL SPEED AHEAD

Members of the American College of Nuclear Physicians (ACNP)/Society of Nuclear Medicine

(SNM) Government Relations Committee had their first joint committee meeting Friday, September 15, 1995 in Washington, D.C. to describe the restructuring of the office as well as its strategic and tactical plans for the upcoming months. Here are highlights from the meeting:

### Syncor Files Suit Against the Food and Drug Administration

The committee discussed the lawsuit filed by Syncor International Corporation on August 31, 1995, seeking to overturn the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) attempt to regulate the manufacturing of PET drugs. "Syncor believes that the states are the proper regulators of the practice of pharmacy and that the FDA's attempt to usurp the states' authority is both unnecessary and illegal," said Gene R. McGrevin, Syncor President and CEO.

The lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., argues that the FDA's regulatory control over PET products would restrict pharmacists ability to produce them by: (a) adopting a new regulatory scheme which violates the notice and comment requirements under the Administrative Procedure Act and (b) lacking statutory authority to regulate drugs, which do not move in interstate commerce. If successful, this suit would provide relief to institutions currently manufacturing PET drugs and facing regulations like the Good Manufacturing Practice Guideline issued by the FDA.

At the October Board of Directors meeting, it was discussed whether the Society will enter into the suit; a decision has not been reached. "It is important that the Society carefully weigh the risks and benefits of joining a lawsuit against the Food and Drug Administration, including possible additions to the suit regarding the practice of medicine," said David Nichols, associate director of the ACNP/SNM Gov-

ernment Relations Office. Currently, the suit only focuses on the practice of pharmacy. The ACNP passed a resolution at their fall business meeting in Washington, D.C., to voice support for the suit and are currently looking at risks/benefits of joining the suit as a co-petitioner.

### Physician Practice Expense Panels

On Tuesday, October 10, 1995 the Committee nominated eight individuals consisting of both Society and College members to serve on the Clinical Practice Expense Panel (CPEP), an advisory group that reviews nuclear medicine practice expenses for the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA).

Effective January 1, 1996, calculating physician practice expenses for services rendered will change from a charge-based system to a resource-based system. HCFA contracted Abt Associates, Cambridge, MA, to collect and analyze Physician Practice Expense Data for this new system. This

*(Continued on page 34N)*

**Government Relations Office***(Continued from page 30N)*

contract is part of a larger HCFA effort to revise the physician expense relative value component of the Medicare Fee Schedule. The purpose of the program is to estimate the variable practice costs of specific services and to develop profiles of practice inputs necessary to provide benchmark physician services.

**SNM Supports Ward Valley Legislation**

The committee members voiced their approval for various efforts that will expedite the building of a low-level radioactive waste site in Ward Valley, CA. They were encouraged by the recent decision by the Second District Court of Appeals in California to uphold the state's decision to issue a license for the facility. The project was licensed by the state in September 1993 but has not yet been developed due to lack of action by the Department of Interior, which has been asked to sell the site to the state. The disposal site is situated on federal land located in the California Mojave Desert's remote Ward Valley. Access to such a regional disposal facility is critical to the continued use of radioactive materials in medicine and industry.

The committee also discussed Congress's efforts to resolve the delays in the transfer of federal lands for the LLRW disposal facility. Representative Brian Bilbray, introduced a bill, which is now part of the Budget Reconciliation Act, that will force the Department of Interior to sell the land directly to California. Both the College and the Society support this development (see this month's *Newsline*, p. 24N).

Other agenda items reviewed included the radiopharmaceutical premarket review, Nuclear Regulatory Commission activities, technologist issues and isotope availability.

**LEGISLATIVE NETWORK MEETING SUCCESSFUL**

The Society of Nuclear Medicine Technologist Section (SNM-TS) met at the end of September in Dallas, TX, to identify a group of technologists from each chapter who could serve as contacts with state legislators to communicate pressing issues in the nuclear medicine community. Representatives from the 12 Society chapters as well as members of the government relations committee learned about the role of the government and various issues that are affecting the nuclear medicine community.

Three guest consultants spoke at the meeting to about 20 attendees. Glenda Price, PhD, Provost, Spelman College, Atlanta, GA, lectured on the governmental changes affecting healthcare today, as well as the socioeconomic forces involved with allied health professionals. Joe Gagen, Joe Gagen & Associates, Austin, TX, provided effective techniques for grassroots lobbying. Finally, Susie Tonymon from Epstein & Associates, Fort Worth, TX, discussed examples of how her organization successfully lobbied to affect positive change.

The next step is the development of an active grassroots lobbying team. Each chapter representative will identify technologists from each congressional district, who can be effective in communicating to legislators any key issues that may arise. "We hope to have a working network by the end of next year, but we realize that this will take time to develop, and will depend on identifying dedicated technologists who are willing to devote time and effort to the cause," said Lynne Roy, chair of the SNM-TS government relations committee (see this month's *Newsline*, p. 28N).

**DISABILITY INCOME PLAN AVAILABLE TO SNM MEMBERS**

A disability income insurance plan with monthly benefits up to \$2000 is now available to members of the Society of Nuclear Medicine (SNM). All SNM members and/or spouses under age 60, who have been actively working (at least 30 hours a week) for at least 90 days, and have not been hospitalized in the last six months may apply for the SNM disability income plan.

The plan provides the choice of a \$1000, \$1500 or \$2000 monthly benefit payable for up to five years when you are disabled by a covered accident or up to one year if disabled by a covered illness. The benefits received will coordinate with any other income sources to pay up to 70% of your monthly salary. Acceptance ends December 1995. For more information of the SNM disability income plan contact: Insurance Administrator, Albert H. Wohlers & Co., 1440 N. Northwest Highway, Park Ridge, IL 60068-1400. Phone: (800) 323-2106.

**Erratum**

Due to a production error, in the August issue of *JNM*, the person third from left in the photo caption accompanying the article, *Outstanding JNM Authors Awarded for Research* (*Sourceline*, p. 31N) was misidentified. His name is Kazuo Kubota, MD.