

NEWS BRIEF

An Internet Link to Congress

If you're connected to the Internet, you can now have a direct hook-up to Congressional happenings. You can access the Congressional Record, text of bills, pending amendments, U.S. Code and committee schedules through either the House Information Service or the Library of Congress. Once you get to the home page or menu, the best way to find information on a topic in nuclear medicine is to click on a category in the index such as "Congressional Record" and

then enter search words such as "FDA," "NRC," "HMOs" or "health care." You can also enter a Congressman's or committee's name or the date of the legislation. Note: your search may not take you to your desired destination all the time. It is more a matter of trying various key words and browsing to see if a particular item is available. Here is how to get the information you need.

- You can get to the House Information Service home page through the Web at <http://www.house.gov>. You can also access it through Gopher at gopher.house.gov or

through Wais at wais.house.gov.

- You can access Library of Congress on the Web at <http://thomas.loc.gov>; or at <http://marvel.loc.gov>.

- To get to the FDA, key in <http://vm.cssan.fda.gov>.

- A good place to hunt around for Federal regulations and policy information is the White House Internet address at <http://www.whitehouse.gov>.

- Cannot find the government information you need? You can get a list of government addresses on the Web by keying in <http://info.er.usgs.gov/gils/index.html>.

OVERHEARD

The Department of Energy (DOE) announced in May that it will reduce its workforce by 3788 employees, or 27%, over the next five years. Secretary Hazel R. O'Leary said the plan would save an estimated \$1.7 billion, and accompanying initiatives would further save \$12.7 billion. These cuts come on the heels of a push by congressional Republicans to abolish the agency and signify O'Leary's determination to save the DOE.

—The Washington Post

When pharmaceutical representatives discuss new drugs with doctors, they give false information 11% of the time that contradicts the *Physician's Desk Reference*, drug company brochures or medical journals, according to a recent study. Inaccurate statements were more likely to cast the promoted drug in a favorable light.

—The University of San Diego Medical Center

Massachusetts universities have a "cavalier" attitude toward the handling and disposal of radioactive material, says an NRC inspector. Spills of radioactive liquid have gone unreported and undetected for days. And radioactive material has been illegally thrown into the trash. Harvard University has been cited at least 8 times during the last 10 years for violating NRC regulations, but Harvard says it has since tightened its procedures.

—Documents from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission

Scientists have created a new kind of superconducting film that can carry 100 times more current than any material of its kind. It may speed development of hyper-tech devices such as nuclear magnetic resonance imaging devices the size of a toaster. The film conducts a whopping million amperes per square centimeter.

—Los Alamos National Laboratory

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such as the RBRVS Nuclear Medicine Update Study concerning Medicare reimbursements—can still have an impact on basic research. In this country, most medical schools derive from 40 to 70% of their research budgets from clinical revenue. If clinical revenue decreases, there will be less research.

The Society isn't abandoning basic science, but the shift in its philosophy is one that is unavoidable. To ensure that nuclear scientists as well as physicians are employed in the future, we need to pay more attention to areas that we used to ignore. If we spend less money on governmental, public relations and health care policy issues, we're going to find that we cannot continue to hold our position when competing with other imaging modalities and other medical specialties as a whole.

Robert Henkin, MD, is a professor of radiology and director of nuclear medicine at Loyola University Medical Center in Maywood, IL. He is beginning his term of Vice-President of the Society of Nuclear Medicine.

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toward funding the socioeconomic activities of the Society. I'm worried these large dues increases will splinter the profession by further alienating basic scientists. One of the major strengths of the field of nuclear medicine has been the strong relationship between physicians and basic scientists that has been fostered by SNM.

One suggestion, which I am in favor of, is for SNM to initiate a new membership category with a separate dues structure for non-U.S. physician members. This should be with the understanding that a fraction of membership dues goes toward activities that have no bearing on basic scientists or physicians who practice outside the U.S., another group of members who feel their needs aren't being addressed by the Society.

Michael J. Welch, PhD, is a professor of radiology at Mallinckrodt Institute of Radiology in St. Louis. He served as President of the Society of Nuclear Medicine in 1984-85.