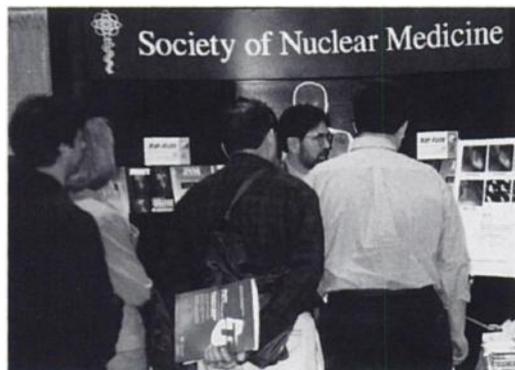


# Public Relations and Outreach Programs Mark Success for SNM



**D. Douglas Miller, MD, Professor and Associate Chairman, Department of Internal Medicine, St. Louis University School of Medicine, reviews nuclear cardiology case studies with attendees at the March American College of Cardiology meeting.**

Over the last three years, the Society of Nuclear Medicine (SNM) has taken a proactive role in promoting its products and services, as well as the practice of nuclear medicine. Within this time, the need for communicating the value and benefits of nuclear medicine became very apparent.

Taking a new approach to address this need, the SNM Public Relations Committee, chaired by Henry Kramer, PhD, with the input of leadership and public relations staff, applied professional communications techniques to identify and prioritize the key audiences for nuclear medicine to reach. As a result, the SNM public relations committee and staff have undertaken many new efforts and are currently enlisting SNM members to market nuclear medicine on a grassroots level to referring physicians, patients and managed care audiences.

## SNM Annual Meeting Press Conferences

The Society's public relations staff has taken several steps to increase media coverage on behalf of the organization and nuclear medicine. In the consumer press, medical and health care stories are some of the most widely read and watched news items. Despite its unique role, nuclear medicine was not receiving the same media attention as other medical specialties. And, while the medical and imaging trade press had reported on nuclear medicine, the coverage was not as extensive compared with other imaging specialties. Consequently, beginning in 1995, the SNM split the Annual Meeting Press Conference into two events. The Society now holds one event for the consumer press and one for the trade press. For the consumer event, the latest research is presented at the lay level and communicated in terms of why this information is important to health care consumers. Then, the Society holds a more technical trade press briefing enabling medical and imaging reporters to talk less formally with the spokespersons and ask detailed questions about the new research. Beginning in 1995, exposure for the role of nuclear medicine has more than tripled with coverage from state television and radio news networks and print news outlets such as Associated Press, Reuters, Minneapolis Star-Tri-

bune and the San Francisco Chronicle. Trade coverage has also expanded to include pre- and post-Annual Meeting coverage in a variety of medical, imaging, cardiology and oncology publications.

## Media Training and Women's Health Issues

Recognizing the extent to which the news media covers women's health issues, the Public Relations Committee and staff decided to pitch reporters on the latest advances in nuclear medicine as they relate to women's health. In 1996, the consumer press conference focused on the role nuclear medicine plays in illnesses such as breast cancer and ovarian cancer, heart disease and osteoporosis. Naomi Alazraki, MD, a nuclear medicine physician at Emory University in Atlanta, served as spokesperson. For the first time, the SNM provided media training for its spokesperson in preparation for the press conference. Media training is a critical element—particularly in such a highly scientific and technical field as nuclear medicine—to assist SNM experts in presenting research to reporters and responding to questions in lay terms. "The media training was unexpectedly more valuable than I thought it would be. It heightened my awareness of how mannerisms and delivery techniques can impact the message you are trying to get across," said Alazraki. "Media training involves an organized way of approaching discussions, interviews and presentations that ultimately make the presenter more organized and makes the whole presentation more effective."

## Referring Physician Outreach and the Inter-Society/Industry (IS/I) Program

Another aspect of the SNM's outreach efforts includes enhanced communication with the many specialists whose areas of practice and research interact significantly with nuclear medicine. The Society's public relations staff has had terrific success in placing articles and editorials with the trade magazines read by cardiologists, oncologists and general practitioners. To further communicate to these important audiences, SNM staff and member representatives have exhibited at the annual meetings of the American College of Cardiology, American Society of Clinical Oncology, Radiologic Society of North America and the American Society of Therapeutic Radiation Oncology. Opportunities to exhibit and arrange for keynote speakers at the National Managed Health Care Congress are also being investigated.

Simultaneously, the Society's leadership and pub-

lic relations staff have been engaged in the larger community-wide IS/I Program whose mission is "to make nuclear medicine an integral part of appropriate patient management." Recently, the SNM leadership redefined the organization's goals, one of which was to "establish SNM as the driving force to integrate nuclear medicine into health care delivery." With these objectives so closely aligned, the SNM Public Relations Committee and staff devised a communications strategy in support of both of these endeavors. The IS/I movement is a harnessing of resources between the SNM, American College of Nuclear Physicians, American Society of Nuclear Cardiology, American College of Nuclear Medicine, the Institute for Clinical PET and the commercial sector. The SNM is working closely with these groups by sharing information and resources for an enhanced promotion of nuclear medicine.

"Everything that SNM public relations is doing directly aligns the new SNM goals while contributing to the objectives and mission of the IS/I. Public relations is playing a major role in moving

the organization along the path to enhanced visibility for and awareness of nuclear medicine. With our own efforts and by working with the IS/I member organizations, the specialty will benefit in the medical marketplace and in the consumers' eyes," said Kristin Ludwig, SNM associate director for marketing and public relations.

#### **SNM Press Kit and Centennial Booklet Win National Recognition**

The SNM won two awards in the 1996 *Association Trends* national publications contest: one award for the Annual Meeting press kit (written in lay terms) and a second award for the "Nuclear Medicine: 100 Years in the Making" centennial booklet. Over 400 entries for association magazines, annual reports, press kits and promotional pieces were submitted to *Association Trends* from all over the country. Several hundred communications professionals attended the January 30th awards luncheon at which the winners were presented with plaques and certificates.

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#### **Technologists Plan for the Future** (Continued from page 24N)

audience.

The goal of ensuring the competence of NMTs is furthered through a project developed by the Socioeconomic Affairs Committee, chaired by Denise Merlino, MBA, FSNM-TS. This committee soon will release the *Developing Employee Assessments and Competencies* booklet that shows how three facilities developed and used their own documentation to measure their employees' competence. This book will help departments prepare to meet Joint Commission for the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations requirements on technologist competency evaluations and documentation.

Increasing membership market share is a step toward the goal of fiscal viability that involves the SNM-TS Membership Committee. This committee is removing barriers to membership by simplifying the membership categories, creating a category for commercial members and making the

membership year coincide with the fiscal year. Kathy Thomas, CNMT, Membership Committee chair and president-elect, says that the SNM-TS "needs to represent people with more diverse needs" and capture the market of multiskilled technologists who are not currently served by any one professional society. There is a potential membership pool of more than 17,000 Nuclear Medicine Technology Certification Board-registered technologists into which the SNM-TS can tap. Current SNM-TS membership is about 7000 members.

Pickett, Herbst, Merlino and Thomas agreed that cooperation between the technologists and the physicians and scientists is necessary for each to learn from the other to achieve the goals necessary to make nuclear medicine an integral part of health care delivery. The technologists' new strategic objectives have much in common with the SNM's new strategic goals. Teamwork can create a synergism strong enough to bring about the changes necessary to ensure the future of nuclear medicine.

—Dawn Murphy

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#### **San Antonio** (Continued from page 26N)

##### **Exhibits**

The exhibit space is larger than last year's. Currently, there are 100 exhibitors, 19 of whom are new exhibitors. One new feature: there will be "human arrows" directing people from outside the convention center. Also, bigger banners and signs will help attendees find their destinations inside the convention center.

As in past years, Wagner will continue his time-honored tradition (20 years and counting) of concluding the meeting with his view of the scientific highlights at the close of the Annual Meeting. Look in the August issue's *Newsline* for Wagner's published account of the scientific research presented at the Annual Meeting. "This year's meeting should be an outstanding combination of science, continuing education and commercial exhibits that we have ever presented," Eckelman said.