

Education and Research Foundation Addresses Decline in Grant Applicants

Since its inception almost 30 years ago, the Society of Nuclear Medicine's (SNM's) Education and Research Foundation (ERF) has been dedicated to attracting talented physicians, scientists and technologists to the field of nuclear medicine by funding research and educational opportunities. Investing in the specialty's future was the goal of the ERF's original board, and it remains one that its current leadership continues to uphold despite a significant challenge in recent years: a decline in the number of physicians seeking funding for research efforts.

Decline in Grant Applicants

"Physicians are not applying for grants," according to current ERF president Howard Dworkin, MD, chief of nuclear medicine, William Beaumont Hospital, Royal Oak, MI, "and this is a development we've seen in other specialties, not just nuclear medicine." One possible explanation for this trend is that "physicians have less time for research, which will hurt nuclear medicine in the long run and all of medicine eventually," added Dworkin. To address this concern, the ERF has hired a firm to determine why there are so few grant applicants. Their report, which is scheduled to be completed in June 1998, will compile data from a survey targeted to specific academic centers.

Other Projects

In addition to the attrition study, the ERF has partnered with SNM on the revision of the textbook, *Fundamentals of Nuclear Medicine*, which is primarily geared to residents to interest them in the specialty. The ERF's role in this project has been to provide funds so that the book's editors can work full time on the text. "The interest the Foundation earns from the Cassen endowment allows us to support these and other activities," said Dworkin, "and we continue to look for worthwhile investment projects to produce income from the endowment."

Educational Opportunities

The ERF's educational activities, which support students as well as fledgling and experienced investigators, are funded through private donations and bequests. Currently, the ERF offers the following awards:

- The prestigious Cassen Prize, sometimes called the "Nobel Prize of nuclear medicine," and named in honor of Benedict Cassen, PhD, the late physicist and inventor of the rectilinear scanner, is a \$25,000 unrestricted award to a living scientist or physician-scientist whose work has made a major advance in clinical nuclear medicine science. However, the total amount may be increased in exceptional circumstances if the Prize is shared by more than one recipient. Funds for the Prize as well as for the Cassen Postdoctoral Fellowships (described below) are from a \$1.25 million bequest from Cassen's widow, Mary Wylie Cassen. Nominations for the Prize are solicited each year, but the

ERF is not required to make an annual award. A panel of national and international scientists and/or physician-scientists assists in the selection process, and the Prize is presented at the SNM Annual Meeting. Nomination requirements include a brief summary of the nominee's work; a short biography, including descriptions of positions held and awards received; up to six peer-reviewed journal references that support the nominee's work and contributions; and up to three letters of recommendation from individuals qualified to judge the nominee's contributions to nuclear medicine. To date, there have been two recipients of the Prize: Hal O. Anger, BS, DSc, in 1994 and David E. Kuhl, MD, in 1996. Henry N. Wagner, Jr., MD, is to be presented with the Prize at SNM's 45th Annual Meeting in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, in June 1998.

- Cassen Postdoctoral Fellowships provide recent doctoral candidates who have demonstrated exceptional research abilities opportunities to expand their research experience by participating in research activities at an institution other than the one conferring the doctoral degree. The purpose of the fellowships (a \$25,000 award) is to attract young scientists to the field of nuclear medicine. This year fellowships are being awarded to Lars-Eric Adam, PhD, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, and to Sungwoon Choi, PhD, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
 - Student Fellowships are grants to encourage medical, premedical, graduate or pharmacy students to enter the field of nuclear medicine. The \$3000 grants allow students to spend elective time working with leaders in the field for 3-month periods. Five student fellowships are being awarded in 1998: Douglas A. Dougherty, Stony Brook University Hospital, Stony Brook, NY; Sean Shahram Erami-Avedon, Mt. Sinai Hospital, Toronto, Ontario, Canada; Matthew Arkin, Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA; Nida Totonchian, Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA; and Christine O'Neill, Winthrop University Hospital, Mineola, NY.
 - Pilot Research Grants are \$5000 (maximum) awards that enable nuclear medicine researchers to test and document new ideas before securing major research grant support. Five grants are being awarded in 1998. Three of the recipients are at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA: Stephen L. Eck, MD, PhD, Richard Freifelder, PhD, and Chyng-Yann Shiue, PhD; the other awardees are Hong-Gang Liu, MS, University Hospital, University of Alabama-Birmingham, Birmingham, AL, and Alan B. Packard, PhD, Children's Hospital, Boston, MA.
 - The Mark Tetalman Award, which is named for a promising young nuclear medicine physician whose career was tragically shortened, is an annual grant that recognizes the accomplishments of researchers 36 years old or younger.
 - The Paul Cole Scholarship Award is a restricted fund to
- (Continued on page 30N)*

vision Guidelines, a document developed by a task force I appointed last fall. (For the full text of the Guidelines and a related story, see April's *Newsline*, pages 26N and 28N.)

New Journal of Nuclear Medicine Editor

R. Edward Coleman, MD, chair of the SNM publications committee, presented the third item on the agenda. Coleman reported on the process used by the committee in the nomination of a new editor for *The Journal of Nuclear Medicine*. Following a 4-month-long call for candidates within the pages of the journal and through SNM committees and councils, the committee received a number of carefully prepared applications drawn up according to a format set by the committee. Each candidate described his or her vision for the journal. Five superbly qualified finalists were extensively interviewed by the committee. After considerable deliberation, the committee nominated Martin P. Sandler, MD, as the editor-designate of *The Journal of Nuclear Medicine*. The House approved the committee's recommendation by acclamation.

Executive Director Search Update and Nuclear Medicine Integration

In a similar agenda item, the SNM executive director search committee noted that interviews are under way and several potential candidates have been identified. Meanwhile, SNM is functioning very well with its interim management structure under the leadership of Virginia Pappas, CAE.

A final item dealt with the proposed integration of the multiple groups representing nuclear medicine into a single organization. Time, however, was running out, and this important question was tabled for further deliberation at the June meeting in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Additional Comments

Turning from the House of Delegates meeting, a few final remarks.

As you may have already learned, B. Leonard Holman, MD, past president of SNM (1987–1988), died on February 1 (see page 18N). I know that his passing has been a personal loss as well as a loss for our profession as a whole. But Leonard has left us a fine legacy in his remarkable vision and through the insights we may gain from his research. Although he was best known for his monumental work on brain imaging, he also made many contributions to cardiovascular imaging, radiopharmaceutical development and resident education. While Leonard's publications stand as a monument to his life, it is his easygoing style and wise counsel that will be most sorely missed. Our field is richer for his participation as it is diminished by his loss.

Finally, some of you may have noticed my "Please Vote!" announcement that appeared in last month's *Newsline*. If you didn't, let me remind you that by the time you read this our annual election will be taking place. Some of you will have voted, others will have not. On average, only 18% of the electorate express their views by voting in our elections.

Elections are not the time to be a shrinking violet. Nuclear medicine is a vibrant field, with new radiopharmaceuticals enhancing our clinical value and innovative instrumentation improving the quality of our images. These attributes are recognized by residents and fellows, who are applying for available training positions. To make SNM responsive to your needs, you must cast your ballot each year.

More importantly, I strongly encourage you to become active in your chapter and to apply for positions on committees of the national organization. We want to hear you. We want to help you. Vote!

I look forward to seeing all of you in Toronto. Thirty-three hours of continuing education and dozens of scientific sessions are planned to enrich your knowledge of nuclear medicine. Come to review what you are doing well and to learn what new things you should consider incorporating in your practice.

Education and Research Foundation

(Continued from page 14N)

support technologist training. The award (\$1000 grant) is named for the late Paul Cole, former SNM Technologist Section president, who actively promoted nuclear medicine technology student scholarship. It is based on financial need and academic merit.

- The Technologist Award is a \$1000 annual award that recognizes excellence in research activities by nuclear medicine technologists and highlights the important role technologists have in nuclear medicine research.
- The Alavi-Mandell Prize was created in 1986 from donations from former ERF president Abass Alavi, MD, professor of radiology, neurology and psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, Philadelphia, PA, who provided a \$15,000 grant in memory of his father, an ardent lover of learning who wanted to be a physician, and from Gerald Mandell, MD, DuPont Institute, Wilmington, DE, who, inspired by Alavi's action, donated \$10,000 in memory of his own

father. The funds were combined to provide six or seven annual prizes of \$200 each to nuclear physician residents and fellows who have published, as first authors, outstanding original articles in *The Journal of Nuclear Medicine*.

Future Focus

The ERF certainly is looking to the future as it actively promotes the educational and research opportunities available in nuclear medicine through its range of projects. "Raising additional monies to support more educational activities is but one of the goals for the coming year," said ERF president-elect Conrad E. Nagle, MD, chief of nuclear medicine, William Beaumont Hospital, Troy, MI. "Dr. Dworkin has implemented educational efforts that I plan to continue, and I also want to see if the Foundation can coordinate, with or without funding, multi-center trials with the Council of Clinical Trials."

—Eleanore Tapscot