

# 1998 Annual Meeting Press Conferences Produce Limited Coverage of Nuclear Medicine But Reach New Media Outlets

**Society  
News  
Featured on  
CNN and  
Popular  
Web News  
Site**

The press events at the Society of Nuclear Medicine's (SNM's) 45th Annual Meeting in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, which reported on advances in nuclear medicine in detecting breast cancer spread and diagnosing previously difficult to detect heart disease, produced news coverage in media outlets that SNM had not previously reached. The challenge of having the Annual Meeting in a Canadian city and achieving media coverage in both Canada and the U.S. was met with limited success by using different strategies than used at previous Annual Meetings.

As a result of the Monday, June 8, 1998, press conference, the number-one television station in Toronto, CFTO-TV, aired a health segment on its noon news show, which has approximately 250,000

viewers. In addition, this segment was fed to affiliate stations throughout Canada and was picked up by two additional television stations. Also, CBC-AM radio, one of the largest all-news radio stations in Toronto (the Canadian equivalent of National Public Radio), began airing coverage of the SNM Annual Meeting on its Monday noon news show and aired segments throughout the day and evening. During an afternoon news show, the CBC-AM coverage also included a live 6-minute interview with Annual Meeting co-spokesperson Jack A. Ziffer, MD, PhD, Miami Cardiac and Vascular Institute, Miami, FL. The Canadian Press (equivalent to the Associated Press) covered the press conference and issued a wire story that was picked up and published

*(Continued on page 17N)*

## Computer and Instrumentation Council Presents Young Investigators Symposium

Each year at the Society of Nuclear Medicine's Annual Meeting, the Computer and Instrumentation Council presents a Young Investigators (YI) Symposium. The Council's seventh symposium was held in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, on Monday, June 8, 1998. Coordinator of this year's symposium was Margaret Daube-Witherspoon, PhD, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, MD.

Medical students, residents, fellows, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows and those with less than 2 years experience as a faculty member are eligible. To be considered for the symposium, interested and eligible applicants check the YI box on the abstract form when submitting abstracts for the Annual Meeting. Abstracts undergo standard review for scientific program abstracts. When this process is completed, the instrumentation and data analysis subchairs provide to the symposium coordinator the highest-scoring abstracts submitted by investigators who checked the YI box. The coordinator then chooses from those the seven to be pre-

sented at the symposium, which is typically the first session of the first day of the Annual Meeting. The coordinator selects three or four judges to listen to the presentations and evaluate them for originality, scientific merit, quality of presentation and adherence to time limits. The judges confer and select the best presentation. The investigator giving the best presentation is awarded \$500, and the remaining finalists each receive \$100.

Presenters at the 1998 symposium were as follows:

Matthias Schmand, Max Planck Institute, Cologne, Germany; Performance of a LSO/NaI(Tl) Phoswich Detector for a Combined PET/SPECT Imaging System (best presentation winner)

Thomas H. Farquhar, UCLA School of Medicine, Los Angeles, CA; Effect of Lesion Contrast, Size, and SNR on Detectability in PET as Measured by ROC Analysis

L. Alison Green, UCLA School of Medicine, Los Angeles, CA; Tracer Kinetic Modeling of 8-[F-18]-Fluoroganciclovir PET Data: A New Tracer for Measuring Reporter Gene Expression

George K. Kastis, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ; High-Resolution SPECT Imager for Three-Dimensional Imaging of Small Animals

George Kontaxakis, German Cancer Research Center, Heidelberg, Germany; Optimized Implementation and Performance Evaluation of Iterative Image Reconstruction (IIR) Algorithms for PET on Distributed Pentium Systems and a Web-Based Interface

Andreas J. Morguet, UCLA School of Medicine, Los Angeles, CA; Evaluation of a Newly Developed Small-Animal PET Scanner in Experimental Myocardial Infarction

Robert Z. Stodilka, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada; The Relative Importance of Scatter and Attenuation Correction for Quantitative Brain SPECT

Judges were Margaret Daube-Witherspoon, PhD; Frederic H. Fahey, DSc, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC; W. Lesley Rogers, PhD, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI; and Nathaniel M. Alpert, PhD, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, MA.

—Frederic H. Fahey, DSc

## Thyroid Cancer

(Continued from page 12N)

cells resist chemotherapy drugs. He is gathering patients for a human trial of the drug paclitaxel, or Taxol, which is the only chemotherapy drug that has been shown to be active in anaplastic thyroid cancer. Just as there are mechanisms on the cell membrane that pump in iodine, there are mechanisms on some cancer cells that pump out chemotherapy drugs. Controlling these pumps could make the cancer cells more vulnerable to the drugs.

### Potassium Iodide for Prevention—

Along with successfully treating most thyroid cancer cases, iodine can also be effective in preventing thyroid cancer. Radioactive iodine is a product of fissioning uranium and could be released into the environment by a serious accident at a nuclear reactor, causing unintended thyroid damage or cancer. If a stable isotope of iodine, in the form of potassium iodide (KI) tablets, is administered before exposure to radioactive iodine, the stable iso-

tope builds up in the thyroid, thus blocking entry of the radioactive iodine and limiting the damage.

The American Thyroid Association's Public Health Committee recommends stockpiling KI tablets for prophylaxis in the event of a nuclear reactor accident. Peter Crane, who had petitioned the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to change its policy to endorse KI stockpiling in addition to evacuation and sheltering after a nuclear reactor accident, spoke at a November 5, 1997, meeting of the NRC commissioners. He stated, "Potassium iodide is an effective, safe and cheap medicine, with a long shelf life. It prevents thyroid cancer and other thyroid diseases by blocking the absorption of inhaled or ingested radioactive iodine. . . . In fact, 3 years ago the NRC's technical staff calculated that it would be cheaper to buy a national stockpile of KI—for a total of a few hundred thousand dollars, or \$1100 for the average plant—than to go on studying whether to do so."

Crane argued that the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant showed that thyroid cancer is indeed a major result of a large reactor accident, even when evacuation is carried out. Experience in Poland, where KI is stockpiled, shows that large-scale deployment of KI is safe, he said, and that the accident at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant showed that it is difficult to obtain a sufficient supply of KI in an emergency.

The NRC does not require the stockpiling of KI tablets, even though in March 1994 NRC staff advised doing so. "It appears prudent to stockpile KI for limited populations located close to the operating nuclear power plants. This option represents an interoffice consensus and is recommended by the [NRC] staff. While NRC encourages the stockpiling of KI, the decision to stockpile, distribute and use KI would be the responsibility of the individual states."

—Allen Zeyher

## Annual Meeting Press Coverage

(Continued from page 10N)

by two national Canadian daily newspapers.

In the U.S., SNM received two first-time media hits. In coverage from June 19 through June 21, CNN aired a story about the use of lymphoscintigraphy to detect the spread of breast cancer less invasively and in a less costly manner than conventional surgery. The segment featured a pre-Meeting interview with spokesperson Naomi Alazraki, MD, Emory University, Atlanta, GA. Millions of CNN viewers worldwide learned how nuclear medicine can spare women with breast cancer the complications of unnecessary surgery to learn if their cancer has spread to the lymph nodes. In addition, several Atlanta television stations aired similar stories featuring Alazraki. This coverage was achieved with contacts and assistance from the Public Affairs Office of the Emory University Health and Sciences Department.

The other first-time media opportunity SNM realized was having its news posted on a popular World Wide Web news site. Reuters Health Information Services

featured a story about the use of SPECT in emergency departments to diagnose heart disease and another story about lymphoscintigraphy. The reporter from Reuters Health online attended the press conference via teleconferencing, which was offered for the first time at the 1998 Meeting. This online media coverage was achieved with contacts and assistance from the Public Relations Department at Miami Cardiac and Vascular Institute.

The Annual Meeting also received some first-time coverage in the trade press. In addition to coverage by *Advance*, *Diagnostic Imaging* and *Applied Radiology*, reporters from *The Medical Post*, *Oncology News International* and *Administrative Radiology* also attended the press conferences and many scientific sessions. At the trade press conference, Robert F. Carretta, MD, Roseville Community Hospital, Roseville, CA, served as spokesperson and moderated a roundtable discussion between reporters and Daniel S. Berman, MD, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Los Angeles, CA; Hans J. Biersack, MD, University of Bonn, Germany; R. Edward Coleman, MD, Duke University Medical Center, Durham, NC; and Don-

ald A. Podoloff, MD, Houston, TX. In addition, *Radiology Imaging Letter*, *Health Technology Trends* and *RT Image*, which were unable to be represented at the Annual Meeting, are expected to publish articles on the new nuclear medicine research.

Post-Meeting coverage will continue for several months as a result of nationwide syndicated release of three newspaper articles and one radio public service announcement (PSA). The articles and PSA address breast lymphoscintigraphy, SPECT in emergency departments and nuclear cardiology's applications in women's heart disease. These pieces will be running in small- to medium-sized markets and will list SNM's phone number and web site to contact for more information. This is SNM's first time using this newspaper syndication service.

Although this year's coverage was more limited than in 1997, the news coverage achieved in both the consumer and trade press is valuable to the Society's efforts to educate the public and referring physicians about the value and benefits of nuclear medicine.

—Carolyn Pemberton