

Federal Privacy Standards Proposed

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) closed its comment period on the proposed Standards for Privacy of Individually Identifiable Health Information on February 21. Under provisions of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), enacted August 21, 1996, if legislation establishing privacy standards was not enacted by the same date in 1999, then the HHS Secretary would devise and issue these standards and supporting regulatory provisions.

The rule developed by HHS will impact every aspect of patient care and record keeping and merits close scrutiny by every clinician and researcher. An overview of the proposed standards is available online through the HHS Web site at: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/admnsimp/pvcsumm.htm>. Full text of the proposal is available through links from the site.

HHS maintains that the proposed standards will:

- allow health information to be used and shared easily for treatment and payment of health care;
- allow health information to be disclosed without an individual's authorization for certain national priority purposes (such as research, public health, and oversight), but only under defined circumstances;
- require written authorization for use and disclosure of health information for other purposes; and
- create a set of fair information practices to inform people of how their information is used and disclosed, ensure that they have access to information about them, and require health plans and providers to maintain administrative and physical safeguards to protect the confidentiality of health information and protect against unauthorized access.

The proposed rules cover all health care providers who transmit health information electronically, all health plans, and all health care clearinghouses. These covered entities would be prohibited from using or disclosing health information except as authorized by the patient or as explicitly permitted by the regulation. The regulation would permit use and disclosure of health information without authorization for purposes of health care treatment, payment, and operations, and for specified national policy activities under conditions tailored for each type of such permitted use or disclosure.

Other elements of the complex proposal discussed in the HHS overview include disclosures without authorization for health care treatment, payment, and operations; uses and disclosures with individual authorization; permissible uses and disclosures for purposes other than treatment, payment and operations; individual rights; administrative requirements and policy development and documentation; scalability; and enforcement (with fines up to \$25,000 per year for each violated standard). In a final footnote on entities and practices not covered by the proposed rule is the fact that any health care provider who maintains a solely paper information system cannot be subject to the privacy standards.

International Nuclear Medicine Congress Set for 2002

Santiago, Chile, will be the host country for the joint congress of the World Federation of Nuclear Medicine and Biology (WFNMB) and the Asociación Iberoamericana de Sociedades de Biología y Medicina Nuclear (ALASBIMN), scheduled for September 29–October 4, 2002. Scientific sessions, special presentations, and satellite events are being arranged under the direction of Patricio Gonzalez, MD, Secretary General and Scientific Chair of the WFNMB, and Ismael Mena, MD, Chair of the International Advisory Sci-

entific Committee. In upcoming issues, Newsline will feature periodic summaries of preparations for the congress and information on registration and attendance.

Doctors in Charge: Help for Physicians in the J-1 Bind

Each year thousands of international medical graduates in the United States find themselves in a scramble for winning positions in what some describe as a "confusing and frightening lottery." Physicians training in this country under the Exchange Visitor J-1 Nonimmigrant Visa Classification often spend the holiday season of their final years of residency or fellowship in a futile search for employment matches with Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) facilities. Language problems, unfamiliarity with the resources, and an inability to connect with sometimes remote and underserved areas often means that these well-trained and capable physicians must leave the country.

Paul Harris, regional manager of Waterford Associates, LLC, an information brokerage in Bayfield, CO, launched the Doctors in Charge program in September 1999. He developed the new service for the benefit of J-1 physicians who struggle each year to find employment and three-year sponsorship in federally-approved counties. Sponsorship allows a J-1 physician to remain in the United States instead of returning to his or her home country to complete the two-year residency requirement. For some young physicians from countries in political turmoil, a J-1 waiver becomes a matter of life or death.

The core of the Doctors in Charge program is a monthly listing of telephone-verified HPSA medical and mental health facilities currently accepting curricula vitae and applications from J-1 physicians. Subscribers receive personalized counseling on everything from how to write

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CVs and cover letters to interview techniques and follow-through advice. Subscribers can access an HPSA site introduction to every facility featured in any month's listings. Subscription terms are for 6, 9, or 12 months and come with a full money-back guarantee.

The program is currently adding a group of attorneys with nationwide experience in immigration and nat-

uralization regulations. This addition is designed to guide each subscriber to the right attorney for his or her individual needs, usually after a written employment agreement has been reached between the J-1 physician and an HPSA facility.

For more information about the program, contact Paul Harris or Renée Olita at doctorsincharge@hotmail.com or 970-884-7017.

Annual Meeting (Continued from page 16N)

Other topics addressed in this track include attenuation correction in cardiac studies, cost effectiveness in oncology/cardiology, and multi-head gamma coincidence imaging.

Legislative/Regulatory

The Legislative/Regulatory track includes courses with emphases on legislative and regulatory matters in nuclear medicine. These are designed to give nuclear medicine professionals an understanding of current legislation and effects on the field. Future legislation and what nuclear medicine professionals can expect from regulatory organizations will

be addressed in several continuing education courses and categorical seminars.

Educators/Business

The Educators/Business track addresses the reality that many nuclear medicine professionals have varied roles and need continuing education in nonclinical areas, such as marketing and business management. Also included in this track are courses for nuclear medicine educators and students.

—Lauren M. Parr
SNM Course Manager

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als who work at interdisciplinary interfaces and do not fall into the traditional silos of the membership sections. Leadership of the IOM is especially concerned about the 'coastal-skewing' of membership: the Midwest is under-represented in comparison with the east and west coasts. Efforts are underway to encourage the nomination of distinguished scientists from the country's midsection.

In 1999 the NAS broke ground for a new building, located in the block formed by E and F and 5th and 6th

Streets in northwest Washington. This eleven-story building will house almost all of the program staff of the Academies and will have two floors of state-of-the-art conference areas, auditoria, and lecture rooms. The IOM will occupy the 7th and 8th floors of the building, scheduled for completion by fall of 2001.

For More Information

For information on the IOM and its programs, projects, and special events, visit the Web site at www4.nas.edu/IOM.

In Memoriam Dov Front, MD

Stanley Goldsmith, MD, past editor of *The Journal of Nuclear Medicine*, reported to Newsline the January 16 death of Dov Front, MD, PhD, in Haifa, Israel. Front was the Director of Nuclear Medicine at the Rambam Medical Center in Haifa. He held the Dr. Paul and Rose N. Geysler chair in clinical radiology at that center and was on the Technion medical faculty.

He was a frequent contributor to the nuclear medicine literature and a past member of the Society of Nuclear

Medicine. He is probably best known for his imaging studies of lymphoma using ^{67}Ga scintigraphy, with a recent focus on this technology as a predictor of response to therapy. Front trained many physicians who went on to make significant contributions in nuclear medicine, including Ora Israel, MD, his successor at the Rambam Medical Center, and Ruth Hardoff, MD, Director of Nuclear Medicine at the Beilinson Hospital of the Rabin Medical Center near Tel Aviv.