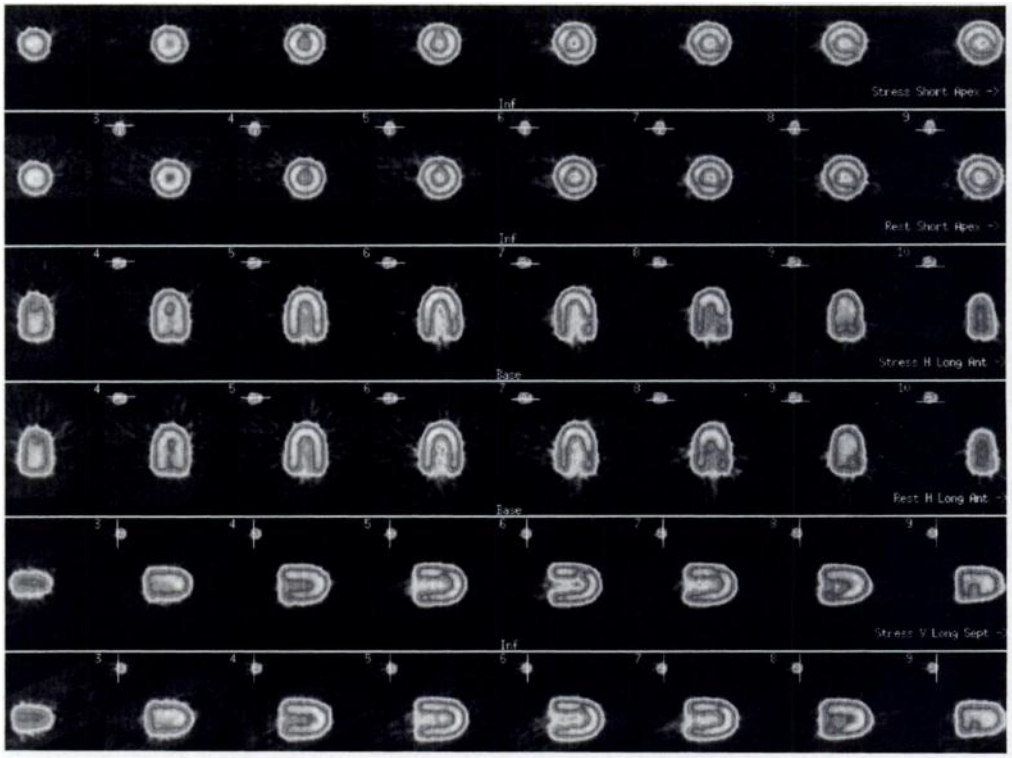
NEWSLINE

Quantitative Cardiac Phantom Study Program Joins Ranks of SNM Quality Assurance Programs

The Society of Nuclear Medicine (SNM) inaugurated its next-generation cardiac imaging proficiency program at the annual meeting in St. Louis, MO. The 2000 Quantitative Cardiac Phantom Study Program is believed to be unique in the field and features a redesigned, 3-dimensional cardiac phantom. Images developed with this new phantom complement the first proficiency study program capable of rigorously testing the ability to diagnose both the presence and extent of potential heart abnormalities. This program joins a growing number of SNM quality assurance programs.

"Every patient with a potential heart problem should be confident that his or her physician's skills and equipment are at peak performance," said Robert F. Carretta, MD, immediate past president of SNM. "The increasing use and value of nuclear medicine procedures in sophisticated diagnoses make it critical that professionals continually evaluate their skills and techniques. We encourage professionals to take advantage of these evaluation tools to hone their skills and make sure their equipment is performing as it should." The 2000 Quantitative Cardiac Phantom Study Program is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. It specifically tests the ability to acquire and process SPECT stress/rest myocardial perfusion studies, identify and quantify areas of perfusion abnormality, and determine the clinical significance of the findings. With the new program, professionals test both their own abilities and those of their imaging equipment to identify the location of a specific cardiac abnormality. They also evaluate their ability to determine the exact

(Continued on page 36N)



Prototype of Cardiac Phantom

***Phantom Program** (Continued from page 34N)*

percentage of the phantom heart affected by the abnormality. The program then allows them to compare their skills with those of physicians and technologists around the country. The cardiac phantom was developed by Keith Bigham of Medical Designs, Inc. (MDI).

The Quantitative Cardiac Phantom Study Program offers a number of benefits to facilities and individual nuclear medicine practitioners. Physicians can review and evaluate their diagnostic skills and compare their performance with others in the field. Technologists can test their imaging skills and are also eligible to receive 3 Verification of Involvement in Continuing Education credits. In addition, imaging professionals can compare and contrast the accuracy of their planar and SPECT images on 1 or more cameras.

The first cardiac phantom was shipped on June 19, and the SNM anticipates significant interest in the program because of the quantitative component. The Veterans Affairs Administration, as part of its congressionally mandated quality assurance program, has ordered more than 130 units of the new program, and another 15 have already been contracted for by private institutions.

The 2000 Quantitative Cardiac Phantom is available at a fee of $625 for SNM members or $695 for nonmembers, plus $35 shipping and handling. The fee includes the cardiac phantom; set-up materials; a critique prepared by a team of qualified physicians, technologists, and consultants; and a confidential report sent back to the subscriber.

Carretta noted that the Quantitative Cardiac Phantom is another important development in SNM's increasing role and commitment to quality assurance for the nuclear medicine field: "By acquiring the materials previously offered by the American College of Nuclear Physicians (ANCP), we can now offer a comprehensive quality assurance program with 4 vehicles through which professionals can enhance their knowledge of the nuclear medicine field, and evaluate their performance. We call them the 4 Ps." They are:

PTP: The Proficiency Testing Program: In addition to the new 2000 Quantitative Cardiac Phantom Study Program and the recently released Lung Perfusion Simulator Study, the SNM offers proficiency testing programs with phantoms for renal SPECT, medium-energy SPECT, and earlier versions of the cardiac SPECT.

SNM Practice Accreditation Program (PAP): This program offers a consultative, in-person inspection of the entire nuclear medicine practice: diagnostic, therapeutic, and in vitro. With its unique on-site component, PAP provides physicians and scientists who are trained and certified as inspectors to review all aspects of nuclear medicine imaging and radiopharmaceutical services, from receipt of radioisotopes to imaging and reading of results.

Procedure Guidelines Program (PGP): First published in 1997, the updated *1999 Procedures Guidelines Manual* includes practice guidelines for 29 different procedures, ranging from myocardial perfusion imaging to bone pain treatment.

Physician Evaluation Program (PEP): This series of CD-ROMs is designed to provide continuing education and American Medical Association Category 1 Continuing Medical Education credits for physicians. PEP is a self-assessment program with organ-specific CD-ROMs containing patient histories and nuclear medicine images. Each participant reviews clinical information, interprets images, and submits written reports of their findings. A bone module and myocardial perfusion module are available currently.

All the elements of the quality assurance program can be ordered through SNM's Web site at www.snm.org or by calling Sandra Griffith at 703-708-9000, ext. 1321.