
History of Nuclear Medicine in Europe

M. Feld and M. De Roo; H. Schicha, K. Bergdolt, and P.J. Ell, eds.; D.D. Patton, trans.

New York, NY: Schattauer, 2003, 166 pages, €49.95 (~\$62)

This book is a new translated edition of a collaborative effort begun in 1995. The impetus for the book was to interview those who have contributed to the field of nuclear medicine in Europe. A graduate student laboriously tracked down and interviewed the various contributors as part of his postgraduate-degree thesis. He could not write about every person making a contribution but did include those with personal connections to the authors and editors. The text concentrates on the first 20 y of the specialty but also covers more recent events.

More than 50 people from 30 countries were interviewed. The history of key developments in nuclear medicine and physics is briefly reviewed, followed by a brief summary of the accomplishments of George Charles von Hevesy, the "Father of Nuclear Medicine." His academic career and regional politics brought him to several countries, and he is therefore listed separately. Most of the historical elements discussed occurred after the dropping of the atomic bombs.

The main portion of the book reviews accomplishments in numerous countries. Surprising were the developments listed for such countries as Slovenia, Portugal, and Macedonia, which one would generally not think of as being in the forefront. The section on each country provides a biographic sketch of personalities, politics, accomplishments,

and instrumentation and concludes by discussing the evolution of local and federal societies, scientific meetings, and board certification. Included are numerous interesting and sometimes amusing vignettes and anecdotes about how equipment was procured and how and which radiopharmaceuticals were produced and delivered. Special attention is given to those involved in the development of PET.

The book concludes with a chapter on the International Atomic Energy Agency and an overview of science and medicine. Peter Ell comments: "What unifies nuclear medicine in Europe is the dissimilarity of models and practice in the European countries." This statement seems to be supported by the historical events cited. A final chapter discusses the contributions of industry.

Overall, the book is a fairly easily navigable story about how nuclear medicine evolved in Europe. Some topics not fully covered were economic issues such as reimbursement and the current state of nuclear medicine in Europe. Those with an interest in the history of medicine will especially enjoy this book. The numerous pictures and stories make it pleasant to read.

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