



At the end of January, Dr. Gary Dillehay presented a number of new nuclear medicine imaging codes at the American Medical Association (AMA) Practice Expense Advisory Committee (PEAC) meeting. The PEAC's actions will be submitted to the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) for inclusion in future Physician Fee Schedule calculations. Nonimaging nuclear medicine codes will be submitted to the PEAC at the end of March.

In early February, Dr. Dillehay and Dr. Kenneth McKusick attended the Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) Editorial Panel meeting. In collaboration with the American College of Radiology, the American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology, and the Society of Interventional Radiology, they offered revisions to the nuclear medicine therapy codes (7900s) and new CPT codes for PET and PET/CT. The CPT Editorial Panel will publish its decisions shortly. The codes will be surveyed to establish physician work and practice expense values for presentation to the AMA Relative Value Update Committee in late April.

The Nuclear Medicine Ambulatory Payment Classification Task Force will be working with CMS to correct errors on radiopharmaceutical reimbursement under the 2004 Hospital Outpatient Prospective Payment System rule. Corrections are expected before April 1. We will keep you updated on this issue in the Government Relations News section of www.snm.org.

The next Reimbursement Road Show will be held March 18 and 19 at the Westin Atlanta Airport. Nuclear medicine physicians and technologists, medical office managers, and billing and medical records staff members can benefit from a better understanding of the major procedural aspects of nuclear medicine services. Topics covered include: proper code selection, claim submission, documentation, CPT and ICD-9-CM manuals, procedure costing, and tips for working with hospital billing departments to assure that nuclear medicine procedures are covered by third-party payers. The seminar also covers evaluating coding and billing practices in light of the CMS bundling initiative.

CARE Act Update

A number of Senators and Representatives have signed on to the Consumer Assurance of Radiologic Excellence (CARE) and RadCARE bills as cosponsors this year. New cosponsors of S 1197 in the Senate include Democratic Senators Tim Johnson of South Dakota and Richard Durbin of Illinois. In the House of Representatives, Rep. Maurice Hinchey (D-NY), Rep. Mike Rogers (R-MI), Rep. Steve Rothman (D-NJ-), Rep. Karen Mc-

Carthy (D-MO), Rep. Thaddeus G. McCotter (R-MI), and Rep. Jack Quin (R-NY) have signed on as cosponsors of the CARE bill (HR 1214). As Newsline went to press, we have 8 cosponsors in the Senate and 61 cosponsors in the House.

Recent Developments

- Comments on Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) 10 CFR Part 35 Training and Experience revisions were submitted by the February 23, 2004, deadline.
- The NRC has issued a final rule revising safety standards for the packaging and transportation of radioactive material. Most of the changes update U.S. regulations to make them similar to international standards established by the International Atomic Energy Agency.
- The NRC has also published the proposed FY 2004 license fees. The broad scope medical license fee was set at \$25,100.

For more details on these and other government relations developments, including links to the original federal publications, go to the Government Relations News page at www.snm.org.

SHPL News

State Health Policy Liaisons (SHPLs) are one of SNM's primary tools in helping advance federal and state legislation that will directly affect nuclear medicine professionals. SHPLs advocate on behalf of nuclear medicine, the SNM, SNMTS, and American College of Nuclear Physicians (ACNP) at both the state and federal levels, providing critical support to SNM public affairs staff and outside counsel on a broad array of issues and activities. Despite the effectiveness of their work, the time demands on a SHPL are minimal: The majority of SHPL activities are handled by e-mail, list serve, or the occasional conference call. The SNMTS Government Relations Subcommittee and the SNMTS Socio-Economic Committee challenged their own members and other SNM, SNMTS, and ACNP members to volunteer as a SHPLs. Volunteers are needed in every state. If you are interested, contact Ken Maynard (kmaynard@snm.org), SNM Associate Director of Government Relations.

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