

Nuclear Medicine Technologists' Scope of Practice Updated

The SNM Technologist Section (SNMTS) recently revised its scope of practice documentation to meet the changing needs of health care. *Scope of Practice for the Nuclear Medicine Technologist 2007* was released by SNMTS in the September issue of the *Journal of Nuclear Medicine Technology* (2007:35:15–17). With a primary focus on public protection and acknowledgment of the evolving nature of technology and science, the document defines a technologist's procedures, actions, and processes in nuclear medicine and molecular imaging.

"Scope of practice is a fluid concept. It changes as knowledge and technology advance and medical imaging evolves," said SNMTS President David Gilmore, CNMT, NCT, RT(R,N). "The dynamic work of nuclear medicine technologists has expanded into the rapidly emerging—potentially revolutionizing—field of molecular imaging. New tools are being made available as instrumentation, radiopharmaceuticals, and techniques rapidly progress. Nuclear medicine technologists must possess the knowledge, skill, and ability to perform their duties. Our scope of practice recognizes changes in medicine and technology and promotes better consumer care and competent providers."

The scope of practice for nuclear medicine technologists now includes the performance of CT scans and administration of both oral and intravenous contrast, as well as in vitro testing (blood glucose testing and urine pregnancy testing) and transmission imaging. The new SNMTS scope document includes parameters for patient care, quality control, diagnostic procedures, radiopharmaceuticals, radionuclide therapy, and radiation safety. This document will receive regular review for consistency with current knowledge and practice. It is anticipated that the document will be useful to states regulatory bodies in defining licensure and to hospitals and clinics in creating position descriptions for current and prospective employees.

"Our scope of practice is a generic description of the practice of nuclear medicine technology and includes information about the profession and its current and future status," explained Cindi Luckett-Gilbert, CNMT, PET, RT(N), chair of the SNMTS special task force to revise the scope of practice. "It includes parameters to define the profession, such as federal and state regulations, institutional regulations, and professional standards. The biggest change to the scope of practice was to include performing CT scans and administering contrast. Since many of the state-of-the-art nuclear medicine cameras, as well as PET scanners, have CT scanners attached, performing CT scans becomes one of the nuclear medicine technologist's tasks."

The SNMTS scope of practice, updated from a 2001 version, is not intended to modify or alter existing tort law; instead, the task force noted that it should serve as a concise outline of nuclear medicine technologist skills and responsibilities. All tasks within the scope are subject to federal, state, and institutional regulations. The document was completed and approved by the SNM board of directors and the SNMTS executive board earlier this year.

SNMTS members who developed the revised scope, in addition to Gilmore and Luckett-Gilbert, include Giuliana Arcovio, CNMT, RT(N), of Boston, MA; Michelle Beauvais, RPh, BCNP, of Highland, MI; Scott Holbrook, CNMT, PET, of Coeburn, VA; Art Hall, CNMT, of Pearland, TX; Kent Hutchings, CNMT, of Byron, CA; Lyn Mehlberg, CNMT, of Milwaukee, WI; Robert Pagnanelli, CNMT, NCT, RT(N), of Hillsborough, NC; David Perry, CNMT, PET, of St. Louis, MO; and George Segall, MD, of Palo Alto, CA.

The "Scope of Practice for the Nuclear Medicine Technologist 2007" has been placed online at www.snm.org/scopeofpractice. The SNMTS also has procedure guidelines that include task-related items and are complementary to the scope document at www.snm.org/procedureguidelines.

SNM Technologist Section