



Dennis D. Patton, MD, 1930–2007

Dennis D. Patton, MD, died peacefully in his sleep on the morning of January 23. He had just returned to his home in Oakland, CA, after a trip to Alaska. He was 76.

Dennis was a native of the San Francisco Bay area. He received a bachelor of arts degree in physics from the University of California (UC) at Berkeley, where he was influenced by some of the pioneers of nuclear medicine. His undergraduate advisor was Emilio Segrè, PhD, and his graduate advisor in physics was Joseph Hamilton, MD.

After 2 years as a graduate student in physics at the Crocker Radiation Laboratory at UC, he decided on a career change to medicine. He received his medical degree from UC Los Angeles in 1959. After internship at Wadsworth Veterans Administration (VA) Medical Center in West Los Angeles and several years of general practice in Santa Monica, he entered the diagnostic radiology residency program at UC Irvine. He established the nuclear medicine service there while still a radiology resident. After 2 years as an assistant professor of radiology at UC Irvine, he was recruited to Vanderbilt University as an associate professor in 1970. He was subsequently promoted to professor of radiology and codirector of nuclear medicine.

In 1975 he joined the faculty of the University of Arizona as a professor of radiology and director of nuclear medicine and also served on the medical staff of the university medical center and the Tucson VA Medical Center. He developed a strong research relationship with Harrison H. Barrett, PhD, and the Optical Sciences Center and, in 1985, received a joint appointment as a professor of optical sciences. He stepped down as division director in 1995 and retired from the University of Arizona in 2001, but he continued part-time clinical and research work as a professor emeritus. In 2003, he returned to the San Francisco Bay area, where he received an appointment as a clinical professor of radiology at UC San Francisco. He had a long-standing passion for PET imaging and was working part-time as medical director of PET Imaging of San Francisco and PET/CT Imaging of Berkeley at the time of his death.



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During his undergraduate studies at UC Berkeley, Dennis took a year off to attend the University of Heidelberg in Germany. His fluency in German was recognized with a Dolmetscher (Interpreter) Certificate from the university. His year abroad marked the beginning of what would be life-long collegial interactions with German scientists and researchers, as well as an enduring interest in international studies and travel. In 1985 he received a U.S. Senior Scientist Award from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, funded by the German government, and

he spent a sabbatical year at the Nuclear Research Center in Jülich, Germany.

Dennis was an internationally recognized physician in nuclear medicine. He delivered numerous invited lectures. Destinations in addition to Germany included Mexico, Kuwait, Malaysia, Thailand, China, and Taiwan. He also attracted physicians from around the world to study with him at the University of Arizona. He was a dedicated teacher and delighted in teaching students at all levels, from grade-school to senior university faculty. He was active in many professional organizations, including the American Board of Nuclear Medicine, American College of Nuclear Physicians (ACNP), American College of Nuclear Medicine (ACNM), American College of Radiology (ACR) and SNM. He was a founding member of the Society for Medical Decision Making and the Kuwait Board of Nuclear Medicine. He was elected to fellowship in the ACNP, ACNM, and ACR and received numerous other professional awards.

He was a man of many talents, including musical composition and performance. His compositions included 3 preludes for piano and also *Elegy for Orchestra*, a musical work for full orchestra that was performed in Tucson in 1999. He was an accomplished bassoon player and a member of several orchestras, including the Civic Orchestra of Tucson.

Dennis had an ongoing interest in the history of radiology and nuclear medicine and wrote a number of highly regarded articles on the subject. He served 2

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elected terms as historian of the SNM, a position that he relished. He originated the Newsline "History Corner" series in *The Journal of Nuclear Medicine*. At the time of his death he was working on a biography of German physicist Philipp Lenard, a series of vignettes on nuclear medicine, and a textbook on decision analysis for medical students. He greatly enjoyed all of these endeavors and commented, "My attempt at full retirement failed miserably."

A memorial service was held at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Oakland, CA, on February 4. As the pastor said at the service, "Dennis was always more interested in hearing about others than in talking about himself."

As a consequence, few people knew the full scope of his talents. Yet for all who knew him, whether in medicine, music, or community service, he was a good friend who will be greatly missed.

He is survived by his 2 sons: Jim, of Orange, CA, and Bill, of Seattle, WA. Contributions may be made in his name to the Education and Research Foundation for the SNM, 1850 Samuel Morse Drive, Reston, VA 22090, or the Salvation Army.

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can frustrate efforts to create and maintain the professional identity of nuclear medicine scientists. Annual professional meetings, educational opportunities, interaction with peers, and peer-reviewed journals were cited by the majority of survey respondents as reasons for membership in professional associations. These activities should be encouraged and enhanced.

- *Continuing education in nuclear medicine.* The current professional enrichment activities of SNM are an important aspect of this initiative. Although most survey respondents indicated that they belong to professional associations relevant to their scientific disciplines (e.g., physics, pharmacy), SNM provides an important interdisciplinary forum for exchange of professional ideas and information. This should be continued and expanded.
- *Policy leadership for nuclear medicine science.* Survey respondents expressed concern about the lack of current research funding, difficulty in obtaining source materials for research, the current approval process for radiopharmaceuticals, and lack of visibility of nuclear medicine scientists to other medical and health professionals. Advocacy is needed to: address issues related to public policy, regulatory guidelines, funding issues, and infrastructure development for nuclear medicine science; build articulated curricula for clinical and scientific programs to prepare and maintain a competent and competitive scientific workforce; and increase public understanding of the benefits and safety of nuclear medicine, the usefulness of radioactive materials, and the value of nuclear medicine research.
- *Cooperative nuclear medicine venture leadership.* It seems unlikely that any single organization will dominate the nuclear medicine landscape. There are simply too many threads and themes for a single organization to manage or control. This creates an

important opportunity for SNM to continue to serve as the conductor of the "nuclear medicine orchestra." This should be possible to the extent that SNM can help the various constituents to achieve their respective objectives, while shepherding the entire field of nuclear medicine into the future.

- *Public relations campaigns for nuclear medicine.* Strategies and ideas without dissemination and action are like 1 hand clapping—they don't make much noise or have much impact. SNM should assume the critical role of promoter of nuclear medicine science—and nuclear medicine practice, more generally—to the public. This would enhance SNM's image with the public and, more important, with its professional constituents: the physicians, scientists, technical staff, facilities, and vendors that make up the nuclear medicine industry.
- *Legislative lobbying for nuclear medicine.* Advocacy at the federal level is critical for preservation of the science of nuclear medicine. The small size of the profession creates challenges for building reputation and recognition. Nevertheless, it is essential that government policy makers and bureaucrats be informed of the changes that should take place to enable nuclear medicine to reach its full potential.

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