State of the Profession

I am clearly one voice of many, but, as an interested and informed eyewitness of our profession for the past 28 years, I would like to offer a few observations as I leave office. We are now experiencing—and will continue to experience in the days and years to come—some of the most profound and accelerated transformations in patient care with molecular imaging and therapy.

SNM sees that the potential of molecular imaging to revolutionize patient care—by integrating information about location, structure, function, and biology—will lead to a package of noninvasive, in vivo imaging tools that could have vast potential for improving both patient care and the utilization of health care resources. SNM has embraced a core mission of improving health care by advancing molecular imaging and therapy.

For more than 50 years, the society has successfully educated the world about the benefits that nuclear medicine brings to patient care and improved health outcomes. As the organization that has traditionally represented all professionals involved in the practice of nuclear medicine—and as the society within which molecular imaging originated—SNM is uniquely responsible for supporting the new field of molecular imaging and the scientists, clinicians, technologists, and technicians involved in it.

SNM’s new look and outlook reflect future direction. SNM’s rebranding—including development of 2 newly designed Web sites and a new society logo—visually expresses and advances our mission. It signals our intent to address the many needs of our profession’s practitioners and to continually educate members and nonmembers about the field of molecular imaging. We have created a unified organizational identity to better reflect a society that is vital, credible, collaborative, influential, and evolving.

Continued learning is key. State-of-the-art technologies have accelerated the evolution of our profession and will become ubiquitous in years to come. Training requirements for nuclear medicine residents are set to change, fueled in part by emerging technologies. This July, the length of training required for nuclear medicine residents who have had only an internship will be increased from 2 to 3 years. In addition, the requirement for training in cardiac and body CT has been strengthened. To meet the needs of professionals who must be conversant in both anatomical and molecular imaging, SNM offers a full cadre of related comprehensive educational programs. Our field will explode as molecular imaging comes more into the clinical area, bringing with it some of the best and brightest entering their careers.

We seek new science. SNM will reach out to experts in related fields and facilitate the movement of molecularly guided discoveries from bench to bedside. Our “Bench to Bedside” campaign has raised more than $3 million in its first year to fund translational clinical studies and small innovative trials; support advocacy for molecular imaging; and train and educate the current imaging workforce. SNM’s annual meetings, journal articles, and grants and awards program increasingly reflect the evolution of molecular imaging and therapy.

We move forward. Members of our Molecular Imaging Center of Excellence (MICoE) have successfully completed a number of activities—funded by “Bench to Bedside”—that position SNM as a central education repository for molecular imaging. MICoE members have developed a new Web site to provide online information, education, and training in molecular imaging; established a dialogue with funding agencies; created a “road show” that explains molecular imaging and what it means to the society; initiated outreach to referring physicians, patient groups, federal agencies, regulators, and the general public; and launched proactive lobbying for reimbursement, research funding, and related issues.

We have a strong voice in regulatory/legislative affairs. SNM has a voice on Capitol Hill, promoting the profession and calling for funding of essential programs and research. SNM remains committed to increasing dialogue with government and regulatory officers and aggressively seeking to restore and increase federal funding for basic science research in molecular imaging and nuclear medicine; to actively promoting national standards and credentialing; and to providing guidelines for the development and use of radiopharmaceuticals, therapeutic drug development, and creation of new diagnostics.

As I leave office, I want to take this opportunity to offer my profound gratitude for the opportunity to represent SNM members during the past year. I thank SNM’s CEO Virginia Pappas and her superb staff for their dedication and outstanding performance. My best wishes go to Sandy McEwan as he assumes his duties as 2007–2008 president and to our other new officers. The profession—and the society—are healthy and strong and will continue as great forces.

SNM leaders