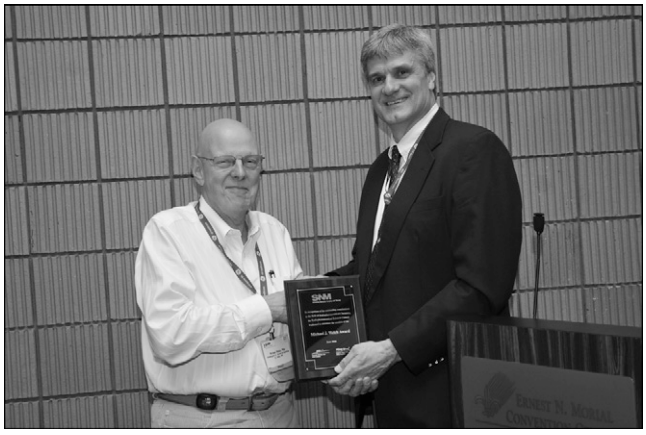
SNM RSPC Introduces Welch Award

On June 15 in New Orleans, LA, at the 55th Annual Meeting of the SNM, the society's Radiopharmaceutical Sciences Council (RPSC) announced the creation of an award to be named in honor of Michael J. Welch, PhD. The award will formally recognize individuals who have made a significant contribution to the field of radiopharmaceutical sciences. Welch, a pioneer in the field of radiopharmaceutical chemistry, received a plaque on behalf of the RPSC from Robert H. Mach, PhD, RPSC 2007–2008 president. The Welch Award will include an honorarium of $1,000, sponsored by Bayer-Schering Pharma AG (Berlin, Germany).



Michael Welch, PhD (left), was the honored guest at the announcement of a new award named in his honor. Robert Mach, PhD (right) presented Welch with a plaque.

Welch is a professor of radiology, chemistry, and molecular biology and pharmacology at Washington University's Mallinckrodt Institute of Radiology (St. Louis, MO). He received his undergraduate and initial graduate degrees from Cambridge University and earned his doctorate in radiochemistry from the University of London in 1965. Applying modern organic chemistry to the preparation of radioactive elements used in medical imaging, he developed rapid methods to synthesize positron-labeled organic chemicals, a process essential in making PET into a practical clinical modality. In the late 1980s, he and colleagues demonstrated that PET scans using radiolabeled estrogen could locate human receptors for that hormone. Subsequent PET studies with radiolabeled compounds provided a rapid and sensitive way to study biological processes in the nervous system. These and other efforts also helped PET gain acceptance for detecting breast and other cancers and for making beneficial choices in patient management.

At more than 4 decades, his National Institutes of Health (NIH)–funded work in "Cyclotron-Produced Isotopes in Biology and Medicine" remains among the longest continuously renewed NIH research grants. Welch has been a principal investigator since 1979. Additional research at Mallinckrodt under his direction has involved radiolabeling agents that can be utilized to assess the receptor status of breast tumors, the preparation of ligands with higher binding affinity for greater contrast in imaging, and the application of microwave heating to increase the rate of chemical reactions leading to radiolabeled compounds.

Welch was elected to the Institute of Medicine in 1999 and was president of SNM in 1984. Among his many honors are SNM's Georg Charles de Hevesy Nuclear Medicine Pioneer Award (1992); the Paul C. Aebersold Award (1980); and the Berson–Yalow Award (1988, 1990); as well as the American Chemical Society's St. Louis (1988), MidWest (1991), and National (1990) Awards for Nuclear Chemistry. He has served for many years on the editorial board of *The Journal of Nuclear Medicine*.

In creating the Welch Award, the SNM RPSC is enhancing its activities, which include discussing and disseminating information relating to radiopharmaceutical sciences, promoting and encouraging basic research and applied technology in the radiopharmaceutical sciences, and providing SNM with information relating to the radiopharmaceutical sciences. Membership on the council is open to all professionals within SNM.