

Funding for Basic Nuclear Medicine Research Restored

On December 26, President Bush signed an omnibus appropriations package for fiscal year 2008. The bill contains \$411,273,000 for biological research at the Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Science, including \$31.5 million for Medical Applications and Measurement Science. This is an increase of approximately \$17.5 million explicitly for basic nuclear medicine research. All of the added nuclear medicine funds must be awarded competitively in 1 or more solicitations that include all sources—universities, the private sector, and government laboratories—on an equal basis.

For almost 60 years, DOE has supported basic nuclear medicine research that helped develop a number of scientific breakthroughs commonly used in patient care, including PET. Since the program was cut in fiscal year 2006, many important science projects related to nuclear medicine have been abandoned, and long-term innovation in this field was severely jeopardized. In fiscal year 2008, the Senate Energy and Water Appropriations Committee report included \$34 million for the DOE Office of Science/Office of Biological and Environmental Research Medical Applications and Measurement Science program, restoring \$20 million explicitly for nuclear medicine research. However, the House version of energy appropriations did not address the issue. After end-of-the-year House–Senate negotiations, the final version of energy appropriations included approximately \$17.5 million for nuclear medicine funding.

SNM has been at the forefront of this issue since funding for basic nuclear medicine research was substantially cut in 2005. Since then, SNM and its members have helped provide awareness of this issue through various outreach activities. SNM would like to thank the molecular imaging and therapy

community for helping restore the funding. This accomplishment could not have been achieved without constant interaction with legislators through constituent phone calls, letters, and visits.



Hugh Cannon

Congress Authorizes Reimbursement Freeze for Radiopharmaceuticals

The House and Senate finalized legislation on December 20 to extend the 2007 reimbursement methodology for therapeutic radiopharmaceuticals into 2008. The freeze will extend current payment procedures from January 1, 2008, through June 30, 2008. This information is a positive development for life-saving radioimmunotherapies that were scheduled to receive significant reimbursement cuts by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) in the coming year. The purpose of this freeze is to give CMS and all relevant stakeholders time to seek a permanent reimbursement formula that accurately reflects hospital expenses associated with the therapy.

Because this is only a temporary fix, SNM will continue pursuing advocacy opportunities to address a long-term fix for radiopharmaceutical reimbursement. For example, in December 2007 the SNM–American College of Nuclear Physicians State Health Policy Liaisons contacted key members of the Senate Finance Committee to address their concern over CMS’s deficient methodology associated with radiopharmaceutical reimbursement.

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