

SNM Young Professionals Committee: Looking to Nuclear Medicine's Future

In 2004, Gina Caravaglia, DO, and Kelly Pham, DO, 2 nuclear medicine residents who were part of the SNM Residents Committee, began to form a new group of young professionals who were interested in better organizing residents and fellows in nuclear medicine. With the guidance and support of SNM leadership, the Young Professionals Committee (YPC) was formalized under the umbrella of the SNM Academic Council in August 2004. The YPC initially included only a few residents who were seeking to further the education and careers of young professionals in nuclear medicine.

The mission statement of the YPC includes the following goals:

- To provide the forum to ensure for nuclear medicine residents and fellows as well as young physicians and scientists the opportunity to enhance the educational experience and participation in the national organization;
- To promote communication among residents/fellows, young professionals, and scientists;
- To establish a bond between residents/fellows, young physicians, and scientists and the SNM;
- To provide the opportunity for SNM to assist residents/fellows and young professionals to become better physicians; and
- To contribute to the growth of SNM and ultimately to the future of nuclear medicine.

Membership in the YPC is limited to physicians, scientists, physicists, and pharmacists currently in or within 10 years after completion of training. The YPC is run by an executive committee made up of members of the group and today operates like most standing committees of the SNM. The chair is appointed by the president of the SNM, and the chair then appoints various positions, including vice-chair, secretary/treasurer, and others.

The YPC has had excellent and capable leadership since its inception. The first 3 chairs were Richard Lucas, MD, in 2004–2005; Heather A. Jacene, MD, in 2005–2006; and Amol Takalkar, MD, in 2006–2007. These individuals, with the assistance of Lynn Barnes and Nancy Sweatt at SNM as well as members of the Academic Council, including Jay Harolds, MD, Darlene Metter, MD, and Bennett Greenspan, MD, have been instrumental in moving the YPC forward.

The YPC also has representatives who participate on various committees, councils, and centers within the SNM, which allows us to interact with leadership of the SNM as well as the society in general.



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The YPC began its close collaboration with the Academic Council by getting involved with several projects and events at the SNM's 52nd Annual Meeting in June 2005. The YPC introduced a poster session promoting research and scholarly activities from new investigators and awarded a prize for the best poster submitted by a young professional.

Another big project undertaken by the new YPC was conducting research into the current job market for nuclear medicine physicians. In 2005 and 2006, a survey was distributed through the Nuclear Medicine Program Directors Association and the YPC Web page to poll recent nuclear medicine graduates about their experiences in finding jobs. Another focus of the YPC was to assist in developing training necessary for residents and fellows in anatomic imaging, a requisite skill in a time of rapid proliferation of PET/CT and SPECT/CT imaging. The YPC also conducted a survey of radiology residents to assess their needs for additional training in nuclear medicine. The results of this survey had special relevance because of the American Board of Radiology's decision to reduce required nuclear medicine training in the 4-year radiology residency from 6 to 4 months at the same time that the techniques and applications of PET, molecular imaging, and isotope-based therapy were rapidly expanding. The results of this survey were published in *Academic Radiology* (2007;14:301–305).

Over the past 2 years, YPC members recognized the potential drawbacks of limiting our numbers to physicians. A concerted effort has been made to reach out to physicists, pharmacists, and scientists to join the committee, increase its breadth of influence, and involve a wider range of young professionals interested in nuclear medicine, molecular imaging, and research. With that in mind, the executive committee has met with early success in adding basic scientists to the YPC ranks.

The YPC has steadily increased its footprint at the Annual Meeting, continuing to sponsor the YPC Research Award for investigations by young professionals in both clinical and basic science and increasing sponsorship of continuing education events, such as speakers at the annual luncheon.

Robert J. Lull, MD, was an early and avid supporter of issues of concern to young professionals. Upon his death, the Robert J. Lull Foundation was established to promote leadership for and by young professionals. At the Annual Meeting in 2007, the Robert J. Lull Leadership Forum was initiated and included 2 speakers who discussed industry and government issues related to leadership by young professionals in nuclear medicine and molecular imaging. This year will be the second year for the Leadership Forum and will include 2 speakers discussing leadership issues in academic nuclear medicine and private practice.

The YPC also restarted a long tradition at the 2007 Annual Meeting. The Young Professionals Knowledge Bowl pitted 2 teams of young professionals against each other in a competition to answer nuclear medicine and molecular imaging clinical and basic science questions. The event, with an attendance of more than 150, was emceed by Robert Henkin, MD, and sponsored by Hermes Medical Solutions, Inc. This social event with a scientific center included refreshments and received excellent reviews from attendees.

At the 2008 Annual Meeting in New Orleans, LA, the YPC will sponsor 5 events in addition to the presentation of the YPC Clinical and Basic Science Research Awards. These events include:

- The 2nd Annual Robert J. Lull Leadership Forum with 2 speakers discussing leadership qualities for young professionals in academic nuclear medicine and private practice at 4:30 PM on Saturday, June 14;
- The 4th Annual YPC Business Meeting and Luncheon, with a continuing education session by Mark E. Rust, JD, an attorney specializing in understanding and negotiating contracts, at 11:00 AM on Sunday, June 15;
- A self-assessment module (SAM) continuing education session introducing the basic concepts of MR imaging at 12:45 PM on Sunday, June 15;
- The 2nd Annual Young Professionals Knowledge Bowl at 6:00 PM on Sunday, June 15;
- A continuing education session on Practical Grantsmanship at 2:30 PM on Monday, June 16.

The YPC has also agreed to be responsible for submitting and maintaining the Cases of the Day, both on the

SNM Web site and at the Annual Meeting. We also hope eventually to participate in the program at the Mid-Winter Meetings. Several updates are planned for the Young Professionals Community, the YPC portion of the SNM Web site. We hope that program directors will encourage residents and fellows to join the YPC and support them in their efforts to participate.

In 2008, a new and exciting opportunity has been initiated by George Segall, MD, and implemented by the SNM Board of Directors. The Councils Internship Program will provide funding for young professionals to participate on each council or center of excellence at the Annual Meeting, at the Mid-Winter Meeting, and in scheduled conference calls. This program will pair a young professional with a mentor to gain familiarity on how a specific council or center (and therefore the SNM) functions. Applications to participate were distributed to members of the Young Professionals Community earlier in the year.

The YPC remains in its infancy. However, in a relatively short period of time the YPC has demonstrated staying power, reaching out to more young professionals, including physicians, scientists, physicists, and pharmacists; increasing sponsorship of events at the Annual Meeting; and becoming involved in the SNM as a whole by participation on various committees, councils, and centers. The future of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging is vast and exciting. The YPC hopes to continue its growth, reaching out to more and more young professionals to take part in their future—the future of the SNM.

We would like to add a note of special appreciation to Lynn Barnes and Nancy Sweatt at SNM, who have been so helpful to all of us during these formative years of the YPC.

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