

# A Look Back at a Year of Extraordinary Success and Forward to a Rewarding Future

A year ago, in my first letter as president, I outlined SNM's vision for 2007 and 2008 as working together as a society and alongside our medical colleagues to improve care for all our patients and to expand the role that nuclear medicine and molecular imaging can play in the delivery of health care. It was clear at that time that achieving this vision would be a big task. It would involve many stakeholders, including the federal government, in particular the Food and Drug Administration and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS); the broader medical community, such as the American Society of Clinical Oncologists (ASCO) and the American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology (ASTRO); the public; and our industrial partners through the molecular imaging campaign.

As I look back over the year, I am delighted to report that we have been extraordinarily successful in translating this vision into reality. In the past year, SNM addressed the technological, regulatory, financial, business development, and health technology assessment and evidence-based requirements needed to successfully integrate molecular imaging into medical care and into the evolving field of personalized medicine. Before these successes recede from view as we face the challenges ahead, I would like to reflect on some of our accomplishments.

A major success was the announcement of the restoration of Department of Energy (DOE) funding for nuclear medicine research, originally cut from the 2006 budget. This achievement was the result of 3 y of dedicated work by members and staff from all levels of the organization. It is proof that a volunteer society can—with hard work, vision, and leadership—make significant contributions to the field through legislative interactions.

As part of this advocacy, we worked with Porter Novelli, SNM's public relations firm, to create a communication plan, titled "Helping SNM Tell Its Story of Serving Humanity," and developed an ad regarding the National Academy of Sciences report calling for the reinstatement of nuclear medicine research funding that ran in *Roll Call*, a nonpartisan newspaper that provides updates of legislative and political interest on Capitol Hill. When the DOE released its budget recommendations for 2009, \$17 million had been restored. SNM continues to urge that 2009 funding appropriated for this vital research be sustained at and increased from the current level approved by Congress. This funding is critical to

the development of the next generation of probes and imaging technologies used by our members. As part of our ongoing advocacy activities, SNM has drafted a government relations strategic plan that calls for advocacy services to address not only our interest in research funding but also CMS reimbursement and FDA issues. We continue to urge Congress to maintain an investment in nuclear medicine research and accessibility to patients, which in the past has keyed the discovery of groundbreaking innovations now commonly used in the treatment of patients with cancer, Alzheimer's disease, and other serious illnesses.

Through the molecular imaging campaign, we have addressed the need to identify not only the next generation of tracers but also the path that those tracers must take to achieve regulatory approval, clinical availability and acceptance, and appropriate reimbursement. To this end, we have established excellent relationships with the appropriate federal agencies and with our clinical colleagues in professional societies, such as ASCO and ASTRO. As a result, SNM collaborated with ASTRO and the Radiation Therapy Oncology Group for the "ASTRO Translational Research in Radiation Oncology, Physics, and Biology" meeting. We also cosponsored an educational symposium during ASCO's annual meeting.

Farther afield, SNM leadership attended the annual congress of the European Association of Nuclear Medicine in Denmark, and our friendship there resulted in collaborative sessions at SNM's 55th Annual Meeting in New Orleans. It was especially gratifying to visit the Chinese Society of Nuclear Medicine's annual meeting, where I was able to discuss various possibilities for joint educational programs. One interesting result of this visit is that a Chinese version of *The Journal of Nuclear Medicine* will be published.

A major challenge facing the whole imaging profession is the issue of technology assessment, evidence-based medicine, and quality measures. This will drive reimbursement and, ultimately, new probe availability in the field for the foreseeable future, and it is an important area on which your board has been concentrating, as it is critical for development and acquisition of expertise within the society. To this end, we have established a working group to develop measures for



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the American Medical Association (AMA) Physician's Consortium on Quality. This achieved a significant early success when members voted unanimously to pass 2 bone scan measures. We are now awaiting quality organizations to perform their own review to decide whether or not to accept these measures. Once that is complete, CMS must give final approval before the measures can be implemented. Although the process of developing quality measures continues to be a challenge, SNM is committed to working with the AMA and other stakeholders to develop the best measures possible to improve the quality of patient care.

It is astounding how quickly time has flown. So many of our big initiatives of a year ago can be encompassed in a few

short lines of type. We accomplished much, but much remains for us to do. We face many opportunities and challenges in our mission of advancing molecular imaging and therapy, and I know the society will be in good hands under its 2008–2009 leadership: Robert W. Atcher, PhD, SNM president; Michael Graham, PhD, MD, SNM president-elect; and Mark Wallenmeyer, MBA, CNMT, RT(N), SNMTS president. They will continue to build on the successes of this and previous years as they keep us focused on the future.

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We are also pleased to be joining forces on Tuesday, June 17, with the American Society for Clinical Oncology (ASCO) to present the CE session, "Optimizing Clinical Trials and Clinical Practice," hosted by Alexander McEwan, MD, president of SNM, and Richard Schilsky, MD, president of ASCO. Details about these and other activities can be found online using the interactive meeting planner ([www.snm.org/meetingplanner](http://www.snm.org/meetingplanner)), keywords "molecular imaging."

We hope you will join us for some of these activities—and be sure to drop by the poster hall to check out the MI Gateway exhibits. The MI trade meet-the-author session is Monday afternoon. A Gateway/Poster Session Mixer will be held from 6:30 to 8:30 PM on Sunday night, cosponsored by MICoE and the SNM Radiopharmaceutical Sciences Council.

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state medical licensing boards. These actions are reported to all of the state medical licensing boards and to the certifying boards. If a physician has had his or her license revoked, it is likely that the board certificate will be revoked. It is important to all diplomates that boards take this action. Failure to act would devalue certification for all diplomates.

In the future, it is likely that additional tools will be used to evaluate professionalism. One tool under development is a standardized set of surveys for peer physicians, referring physicians, trainees, technologists, and patients.

These comprehensive surveys are often referred to as 360° surveys, because they allow everyone around a physician to give the physician feedback about performance. Most of us already participate in 1 or more surveys. The goal in the future is to develop national standardized surveys so that the results of these surveys can be used to develop national benchmarks. National standardized surveys should also eliminate the redundancy of having many local surveys.

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