

## Staying Ahead of Health Care Reform: Embracing an Opportunity for Improvement

As health care reform continues to dominate the headlines, there is no better time than now to step back and cast a critical eye on the changes that are taking place—and to ensure that patients continue to receive the best care possible. In light of the current administration's goals to reduce the cost of health care, SNM strongly believes that it is our role and responsibility to show the rest of the world the importance of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging. Changes in reimbursement are likely to have an impact on medical imaging. Therefore, we are making cost effectiveness a significant priority now and in the future.

As part of the PET Utilization Task Force, a research committee is diligently working to collect, track, and analyze comparative effectiveness studies. In August, the committee held a workshop to draft a grant proposal to submit to the Agency for Healthcare Research Quality for research funding. The proposal, submitted in October, is SNM's effort to bring together representatives from governing agencies—such as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the National Institutes of Health, and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services—with the nuclear medicine community to understand the methodologies behind comparative effectiveness. Facilitating discussion among these groups is important because of the many elements involved in research, such as patient registries, analysis methodology, and clinical trials.

Another priority for SNM is to ensure that the most effective practice guidelines are developed for our profession—an area being spearheaded by Dominique Delbeke, MD, PhD, and George Segall, MD. Two committees are working on this important initiative. David Lewis, MD, is leading the Practice Standards Committee to develop patient-centered standards. One way to achieve this is through the development of appropriateness criteria, or the formulae that physicians should use to determine when to order a study for a patient with a specific problem. The Practice Standards Committee has identified areas in which there are gaps—where no appropriateness criteria currently exist. Lewis and the committee have drafted a plan to collaborate with other societies and engage them in generating guidelines. This is particularly important because the government has asked for an approach that is patient centered and includes input from referring physicians and the imaging community. By reaching out to the Council of Medical Specialty Societies—a

group to which most medical specialty organizations belong—the committee hopes to achieve that collaboration. Involving other societies and organizations in the practice guidelines process will allow for optimal results.

The second committee that is working on improving guidelines is the Procedure Guidelines Committee, chaired by Kevin Donohoe, MD. This group has initiated collaboration with the American College of Radiology (ACR) to coordinate SNM's procedure guidelines with ACR's practice guidelines for nuclear medicine. In revising the guidelines, ACR has also invited contribution from the Society for Pediatric Radiology. Through this collaboration, SNM is working to streamline the guidelines process and ensure that guidelines are revised with the best information available. This will help standardize nuclear medicine practice across the country and improve patient care.

SNM has been actively involved in 2 other projects to standardize guidelines. The first is the development of multisocietal cardiac hybrid imaging guidelines, which includes collaboration among SNM, ACR, the American Society for Nuclear Cardiology, and the Society of Cardiovascular Computed Tomography. The second is a collaboration with the European Association of Nuclear Medicine (EANM). EANM has approved the EANM guidelines for FDG PET and PET/CT quantitative tumor imaging that will be published in the January issue of the *European Journal of Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging*. EANM and SNM intend to collaborate on joint PET/CT guidelines in the future to facilitate clinical trials across continents.

Whether pursuing ways to measure comparative effectiveness, streamline guidelines processes, or collaborate with multiple societies, SNM is fully engaged and devoted to finding solutions to the challenges presented by the health care crisis. SNM will look at the ongoing health care reform as an opportunity to improve the practice of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging—benefiting providers, patients, and the overall health care system.



**Michael M. Graham, PhD, MD**

*Michael M. Graham, PhD, MD*  
SNM President