

From the Newsline Editor

In this issue we continue our annual review of nuclear medicine in 2009, begun in the February 2010 issue of Newsline. As noted in this column last month, the health care and molecular investigational and clinical scenes are changing so rapidly that it is almost impossible to take our collective pulse at any single moment, much less offer sophisticated prognoses about where we will be in 5 mo or

5 y. The news and insights provided by our Newsline annual review contributors are especially valued, because they offer the opportunity to take stock of the past year's successes and challenges and to anticipate events in the coming year.

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From the SNM Health Care Policy and Practice Commission

This has been a critical year for nuclear medicine practitioners. Health care reform has been the major topic in Washington, eclipsing 2 ongoing wars and 1 of the worst economic crises since the great depression. As I write this, the fate of health care reform is increasingly uncertain, reimbursements remain unresolved, and we continue to face the prospect of shortages of ^{99}Mo generators for much of 2010. These are among the issues addressed by the SNM Health Care Policy and Practice Commission in 2009. SNM has more than 15,000 members, yet it is a relatively small player in Washington—nevertheless, we can be effective in areas most closely related to molecular imaging and nuclear medicine.

There were some successes in 2009. Ongoing efforts by SNM staff and leadership to get a bill through Congress to create a domestic supply of ^{99}Mo made significant progress. SNM continues ongoing talks with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid studies about reimbursement issues, especially for high-cost radiopharmaceuticals. A major concern is the proposed cuts in reimbursement. SNM is working together with other involved societies, including the American College of Radiology (ACR) and the American College of Cardiology (ACC), to prevent major cuts in this area. Whether we will be successful is yet to be seen.

Much of the commission's work this year has been to ensure that nuclear medicine professionals are represented when appropriateness criteria and practice guidelines are published. Overutilization of imaging procedures has been

a favorite topic of critics of our health care system. Appropriateness criteria help to ensure that tests are performed for the right reasons. The government and payers are pushing for the development of outcomes-based appropriateness criteria. This is a time-consuming and expensive process, and outcomes data do not exist for most imaging procedures.

SNM established ongoing relationships with other professional societies to develop joint guidelines based on the best available evidence. Such guidelines should have more authority than those published by a single society. We have worked to have SNM representatives to the ACC, ACR, American Society of Clinical Oncology, and other organizations involved in publishing guidelines that affect nuclear medicine.

The future of U.S. medical care is uncertain. Even if a health care reform bill is passed, we will not know its effects on molecular imaging and nuclear medicine for several years. It is important that SNM remain a strong and vibrant organization if we are to maintain some say in our future.

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From the SNM Commission on Education

The second year of the 2008–2010 Education Strategic Plan focused on maintenance of certification (MOC) requirements, CT education, molecular imaging (MI), and 2 technologist initiatives.

SNM's premier online education activity, the Lifelong Learning and Self-Assessment Program, continues to be a primary resource for meeting MOC self-assessment requirements for diplomates of both the American Board

of Nuclear Medicine and the American Board of Radiology. SNM has recently launched its new Practice Performance Assessment Program, which includes projects to assist diplomates in meeting MOC Part IV requirements.

CT education efforts include the Interactive Diagnostic CT cases, which are intended to assist physicians in meeting the 500 CT case-reading recommendations published by both the SNM and American College of Radiology in 2005 and provide DICOM datasets so that participants can experience education in a virtual setting. Other activities that offered CT case-reading opportunities were the live workshops held at the SNM Mid-Winter and Annual Meetings. Three of these workshops are available online through the Learning Center (<http://interactive.snm.org/index.cfm?PageID=939>).

MI activities increase each year. The 2010 Mid-Winter meeting included the Nanomedicine Summit. Another set of Bench-to-Bedside sessions will be offered at the Annual Meeting, as well as categorical and other sessions organized by the MI Center of Excellence. The MI Gateway will be held for the third year, and the MI scientific track will continue, culminating with the MI Basic Science Summary Session, which has always been well attended.

SNMTS has been actively working on its 2 major education initiatives: meeting its recommendation of a baccalaureate degree for entry-level nuclear medicine technologists (NMTs) and establishing a nuclear medicine advanced associate (NMAA) designation for technologists. The Educators' Committee has been working with selected programs in its Pilot Transitioning Program in an effort to help those programs incorporate the *NMT Curriculum Guide* (4th ed). The goal is to transition these programs by the June 2010 meeting. The programs will then provide models for other programs that wish to transition to a 4-y program.

The first NMAA program began in September 2009. An update was provided at the Mid-Winter Meeting, and sessions are planned at the 2010 Annual Meeting to include students' and preceptors' experiences during this first year. The NMAA Scope of Practice has been approved by SNMTS and SNM leadership. Other tasks include working with states to enable development of more NMAA programs around the country.

SNM is up for re-accreditation this year. With the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education Revised Criteria now guiding all activities, efforts have focused on involving all aspects of SNM in meeting the criteria and raising the bar on content and evaluation of education activities. The outside focus on commercial support and conflicts of interest has created challenges in planning and meeting budget for this year's SNM Conjoint Mid-Winter Meetings and Annual Meeting.

The third year of the Young Professionals Committee (YPC) Strategic Plan focused on SNM representation, education for young professionals, and increased involvement in SNM leadership initiatives. The internship program continues to be quite popular, and most SNM committees now have young professional members. The YPC has been active over the past year, offering the opportunity to exchange information, ask questions, and obtain updates on activities and issues relevant to all young professionals. The YPC newsletter is distributed quarterly, and YPC continues to organize activities (both continuing education and others) at the Annual Meeting. The YPC held a summit in conjunction with SNM leadership in September, and many new initiatives resulted from that discussion, including increased mentoring efforts, activities involving chapters, and more involvement of the YPC in the Mid-Winter and Annual Meetings.

Efforts to increase the number of scientist members continues to be at the top of the list for the committee.



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From the SNM MIRD Committee

In 2009, an SNM Medical Internal Radiation Dose (MIRD) Committee commentary on a named quantity for deterministic effects to address interest in α -emitters was published (1), as was Pamphlet 21 (2), which unified the dosimetry formalisms of the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP) and MIRD and which initially raised the issue addressed in the commentary. An abridged version of a comprehensive review of

α -emitter dosimetry and radiobiology (MIRD Pamphlet 22) was e-published on January 15 in the *Journal of Nuclear Medicine* (unabridged version available at <http://interactive.snm.org/index.cfm?PageID=2199>). Together, these publications and other ongoing



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