

A President's Farewell Message

As my tenure as president of SNM comes to an end, I reflect on all the changes that have taken place since I first took office. The goals that I set out to accomplish to advance nuclear medicine and molecular imaging and therapy were focused on 3 key areas: protecting and expanding reimbursement for nuclear medicine procedures, providing high-quality member services by offering essential education, and preserving and expanding available funding to support nuclear medicine research and development. Looking back on the past year, I know that despite some serious challenges faced by the SNM community—such as a continuous radioisotope shortage, looming reimbursement cuts, and a technologist and physician job shortage worsened by a weak economy—we have still been able to take important steps forward toward achieving our goals. For every challenge, there is an opportunity for SNM to show leadership, and this is exactly what we have done.

In my first column as SNM president, I talked about the collaborative atmosphere we have established and how it will help us to arrive at our ultimate goal: more and better life-saving agents and techniques to improve patient outcomes. To date, SNM's Clinical Trials Network, which was created to address a widely recognized need for validated imaging biomarkers for use in streamlining the development and registration of investigational therapeutics, has registered more than 200 imaging sites to participate in clinical trials, and 3 pharmaceutical companies have partnered with SNM to support these initiatives. As one of the cochairs of the network, I have been excited to see its growth and participate in its progression. New molecular imaging agents, such as fluorothymidine and fluoromisonidazole, have the potential to advance medical imaging and harness the potential of targeted therapeutics, which are quickly entering into the practice of medicine.

Another area of high importance in which we have made significant strides is education. There is a pressing need to ensure that nuclear medicine physicians, scientists, and technologists receive standardized and continuing education so that their skills continue to keep pace with and advance at the same rapid speed with which the molecular imaging field as a whole is evolving. SNM is especially focused on attracting and engaging young residents, because they are the future of the field. The Young Professionals Committee has been quite active this year, and they have planned many events with young professionals' interests in mind, including continuing education sessions and a luncheon at the Annual Meeting.

Taking big steps to improve practice guidelines, SNM has been working with the American College of Radiology to discuss how nuclear medicine physicians will be trained in the future. Although many pathways to nuclear medicine exist, this task force has been working on new approaches to raise the standards of education to new levels. I am certain education will continue to play a strong role in SNM's success.

Perhaps one of the most important goals of health care reform is to find a balance between the cost of health care and the benefits for patients. SNM is keenly aware of this need and has created a task force to develop high-quality comparative effectiveness PET imaging studies. SNM submitted a proposal in October 2009 to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) for a grant to hold a workshop to explore comparative effectiveness research in molecular imaging. I am pleased to report that AHRQ recently awarded us the grant. With their funding, we will host the workshop from July 21–22 in the Washington, DC, area and invite decision makers from funding agencies, the academic imaging community, the surgical/clinical cancer community, the health services research community, and patient advocacy groups. The objective of the workshop is 2-pronged: to identify major issues in molecular imaging, cardiology, and oncology that require comparative effectiveness research and to determine the most efficient way to accomplish this research. When the comparative effectiveness research takes place, SNM will serve in the important role of consultant, once again establishing our society as the “go to” source for nuclear medicine and molecular imaging.

I cannot express what an honor it has been to serve as your president for 2009–2010. Thanks to everyone who has supported me, including SNM's Board of Directors. I have great confidence in Dominique Delbeke, MD, PhD, as your incoming president, and I know the society will be in good hands. Meanwhile, I will continue to be involved with the society on many levels, and I will continue to support SNM in achieving its mission to promote the field of molecular imaging and therapy.



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