

SNM 2020 Task Force Assesses Environment for Profession, Society

The SNM 2020 Task Force met in McLean, VA, in mid-September, to discuss the reports of 10 working groups that analyzed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the nuclear medicine specialty and for SNM as a professional society.

The working groups, guided by SNM President George Segall, MD, included: Physicians from Academic Institutions, led by Hossein Jadvar, MD, PhD, MPH, MBA, and Michael Graham, PhD, MD; Physicians from Private Practice, led by Richard B. Noto, MD, and Paul Shreve, MD; Scientists and Pharmacists, led by Frederic Fahey, DSc, and Jeff Norenberg, PharmD; Technologists, led by Ann Marie Alessi, BS, CNMT, NCT, RT(N), and Kathy Hunt, MS, CNMT; Young Professionals, led by Erin Grady, MD, and K.G. Bennet, MD; External Stakeholders, led by Milton (Mickey) Guiberteau, MD, and Robert Hendel, MD; Industry, led by David B. Pendleton and Ward M. Digby, PhD; Members of SNM House of Delegates, led by Leonie Gordon, MD, and Mike Middleton, MD; Molecular Imaging, led by Jason S. Lewis, PhD, and Henry F. VanBrocklin, PhD; and Nuclear Medicine Leadership, led by Henry D. Royal, MD, and Mathew L. Thakur, PhD.

The group saw significant strengths and opportunities for the field and the profession. For example, the tracer principle has proven value for assessing physiology and molecular pathways. The field and the society are also supported by strong research, robust education efforts, and diversity of membership, which promote excellence and collaboration. Clear opportunities for the field include incorporating non-

nuclear technologies to evolve into a broader-based molecular imaging discipline, improving training for young professionals, and advancing the quality of clinical practice.

Task force members also saw significant weaknesses and threats that the profession and the society must overcome. The small size of the profession and the poor job market, coupled with the poor economy, have decreased the number of professionals in the field; the existence of multiple professional organizations with different visions has resulted in competition rather than collaboration; lack of knowledge and understanding of the value of nuclear medicine by patients, referring physicians, payers, and agencies has decreased access to care and limited the growth of the field; and a slow government approval process for new radiopharmaceuticals has discouraged development. Clear threats also were defined, including economics, reimbursement, health care reform, and fragmentation of the field.

Task force members discussed a number of potential scenarios for the future that were presented by the working groups. The final consensus of the group was that the “best” scenario would be: “Nuclear medicine remains a primary specialty evolving into a broader-based discipline of molecular imaging, with partnerships and collaboration as necessary” but that the “most likely” scenario would be: “The field is advanced by dual-certified professionals who practice the broad-based discipline of molecular imaging.”

The task force is currently formulating guiding principles the society will use to move forward. A further report will be included in Newsline in 2012.

Robert E. Henkin Government Relations Fellowship

SNM and the Education and Research Foundation of the SNM announced in late October the creation of the Robert E. Henkin Government Relations Fellowship. Each year, the fellow selected will spend a week in Washington, DC, at SNM headquarters. Throughout the week, he or she will learn firsthand how the federal legislative and regulatory process affects nuclear medicine/molecular imaging. The program is designed for young professionals, defined as a resident or fellow physician, scientist, or technologist who has completed training within the last 10 y.

The award was endowed by Robert Henkin, MD, who for more than 40 y has supported the strategic goals of the SNM to the benefit of members and the nuclear medicine community. In recent years he has shown leadership and vision in quality improvement and evidence-based medicine. Henkin was director of nuclear medicine at the Loyola University Medical Center (Chicago, IL) for 30 y, during which time he also served as chair of the radiology department. In

explaining the need for the new fellowship he said, “Basic science is necessary to improve and drive patient care forward. Political acumen and political action are needed to bring those improvements to patients.” Henkin believes that the SNM needs individuals who not only understand the political process but also possess the skills needed to navigate within the public affairs arena.

Application acceptance for the 2012 program opened on November 2 and will close on December 31, 2011. The fellow will be selected at the SNM Mid-Winter Meeting in Orlando, FL, with the fellowship week to occur at a mutually agreed-upon time between February and May 2012. Expenses for the week will be paid and a stipend provided. Details on the Robert E. Henkin Government Relations Fellowship can be found at <http://interactive.snm.org/index.cfm?PageID=1083>. For additional information, contact Sue Bunning, SNM HPRA Director, at sbunning@snm.org or 703-326-1182.