

Molding the Future of the Profession

As medical professionals, we see change every day. Nuclear medicine is evolving at a rapid pace with new molecular imaging agents and technologies. How will we choose to adapt? Henry Kissinger said, “The real distinction is between those who adapt their purposes to reality and those who seek to mold reality in the light of their purposes.”

SNM has chosen to actively shape the future of the profession in light of its central mission: to improve human health by advancing molecular imaging and therapy. The 2020 Task Force, which was formed last spring, brought together a broad cross-section of health care professionals—physicians, scientists, pharmacists, and technologists from academic institutions, private practice, and industry, as well as other interested groups—to discuss the future of nuclear and molecular imaging.

The task force was divided into working groups to analyze the strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities of the current environment. In September, the working groups met in McLean, VA, to share their analyses and discuss potential scenarios for the future. 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.” At the SNM Mid-winter Meeting, the board of directors will finalize guiding principles the society will use to move forward.

The society’s roadmap to achieving its mission will include the essential pillars of education, advocacy, comparative effectiveness research, and outreach. Appropriate education and training are required to ensure competency in reading nuclear

medicine and molecular imaging studies and to achieve dual certification. SNM has a well-developed backbone of highly regarded education and training activities, and these will be further developed and provided through a variety of formats. Education is also needed in organizing, conducting, and reporting on research so that the findings can support reimbursement.

To support the value of molecular imaging and therapy for diagnosing and treating disease, the profession must pursue comparative effectiveness research. It is difficult to quantify the value of diagnostic imaging, but these data are increasingly necessary to justify reimbursement, and reimbursement is necessary to maximize the effective use of these procedures.

Outreach also is an essential element of the society’s roadmap. There is a need to increase awareness of the value of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging among both referring physicians and the public. No matter how effective the medicine, it will do no good if people are not aware of it.

With a defined scenario to work toward and with guiding principles and a roadmap to lay out the path, the nuclear medicine and molecular imaging profession can ensure the future health of the profession and maximize its usefulness in improving human health.



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