

The Importance of Quality, Evidence, and Value in Nuclear Medicine

One of SNMMI's 5 strategic goals is to "advance and promote the quality, value, and safety of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging." The new national health care agenda emphasizes improving the quality and safety of care provided to patients. Quality measures based on patient outcomes and patient satisfaction are being used by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services for reimbursement and education, from competency to recertification. In addition, several states have mandated reporting of specific measures, and many quality initiatives are being used by private payers.

To implement new quality initiatives, such as creating new quality measures, evaluating the development of registries for nuclear medicine, and developing evidence-based education resources that include appropriate use criteria (AUC) and clinical practice guidelines, SNMMI has established a new Department of Evidence and Quality. Its director is Sukhjeet Ahuja, MD, MPH, a physician with extensive experience in health care research and statistics. I am delighted to welcome him to our senior staff. I am also pleased to report that we have created 2 new committees, the Guidance Oversight Committee and the Quality Committee, to work with this department. I would like to thank Kevin Donohoe, MD, and George Segall, MD, the respective chairs of these 2 important committees.

The newly formed Guidance Oversight Committee will recommend topics for new guidelines and determine a schedule of periodic review and revision of existing guidelines. It will also develop and implement a process to maintain and update the guidelines, prepare joint guidelines with other societies where appropriate, and facilitate opportunities to collaborate with other organizations.

The society is moving from the current process of developing consensus-based guidelines to developing evidence-based guidelines. Using an evidence-based framework, SNMMI will generate AUC, clinical practice guidelines, and other guidance documents for selected key areas. Four

areas have been identified for AUC development: bone scans, ventilation/perfusion scans, hepatobiliary iminodiacetic acid scans, and restaging malignancies with PET/CT. The approach jointly developed with the Alzheimer's Association to produce the AUC for amyloid brain imaging with PET will be used as a template. Also, SNMMI is collaborating with the European Association of Nuclear Medicine to develop guidelines for ^{223}Ra use in metastatic bone disease.

The Quality Committee will lead society efforts to develop tools to measure and improve the quality of nuclear medicine clinical practice. It will also work to establish evidence-based national benchmarks for quality and to monitor trends in clinical practice. The committee will provide recommendations to the SNMMI Board of Directors on issues related to patient care, quality, and safety; create new education programs related to quality; and explore the development of a clinical data registry.

A registry would provide the opportunity for a nuclear medicine department to have its data benchmarked to national standards of safety, efficiency, and appropriate use. It also would provide a framework to tailor medical education programs to the needs of physicians and staff. Participation in a registry can also fulfill regulatory and maintenance of certification requirements. SNMMI will explore the development of a clinical data registry for nuclear medicine during the current fiscal year.

Quality and safety are of crucial importance for effective patient care. SNMMI is taking definitive steps to ensure that continuous improvement is a hallmark of the nuclear medicine and molecular imaging profession.



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