

SNMMI Industry Forum Created to Work Together on Areas of Promise

On September 29 and 30, SNMMI, the Medical Imaging & Technology Alliance (MITA), and the Council on Radionuclides and Radiopharmaceuticals, Inc. (CORAR) sponsored the first meeting of the SNMMI Industry Forum in Washington, DC. The forum brought together professional and industry stakeholders to discuss advancing a sustainable field of nuclear medicine. The discussions began after antitrust guidance from outside counsel. The forum participants were unanimous in the belief that it is critical for their organizations to regularly communicate to improve collaboration.

The forum began with an introductory dinner on September 29, at which leaders from the 3 organizations discussed opportunities to better diagnose and treat patients through innovative nuclear medicine and molecular imaging procedures. Participants discussed some of the challenges that currently face the field and industry. Advancing a sustainable field of nuclear medicine requires renewed focus on education and outreach to patients, physicians, and the general public, ensuring appropriate reimbursement for these procedures and generating comparative effectiveness studies that demonstrate the benefits to patients of nuclear medicine. Progress in these areas will help increase the availability and appropriate use of nuclear medicine procedures and support development of new radiopharmaceuticals and technologies in the future. The dinner ended with an orientation to the agenda and anticipated outcomes from Paul D. Meyer (Tecker International, LLC), who served as facilitator for the forum.

The next morning Meyer led more than 40 attendees in identifying opportunities to leverage the unique constellation of interests and expertise of the participants. One key question centered on the “envisioned future”: What might be accomplished more effectively if, despite differing perspectives, SNMMI, MITA, and CORAR could identify ways to collaborate? This question was explored in 3 breakout sessions focusing on key priorities defined in the morning sessions: education and training, government reimbursement, and evidence development.

The breakout group on education and training took as its working premise that “through education, strategic stakeholders understand and embrace the value, efficacy, and safety of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging.” The goals developed by this group were to:

1. Increase the knowledge of referring physicians about the efficacy and benefits of nuclear medicine, thereby increasing the number of appropriate referrals for nuclear and molecular imaging;

2. Enhance patients’ awareness of the safety and efficacy of these imaging procedures;
3. Educate government payers on the cost effectiveness of these procedures; and
4. Increase the awareness of the public about the safety, value, and importance of these procedures.

The breakout group on government reimbursement focused on actions needed to achieve appropriate government payment for radiopharmaceuticals and procedures in nuclear medicine. This effort includes goals to:

1. Increase available evidence reflecting the benefits of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging;
2. More clearly and specifically define an appropriate government payment system; and
3. Engage stakeholders.

The group discussion placed special emphasis on the importance of demonstrating value to support the cost-versus-benefit analyses that drive government reimbursement decisions.

The breakout group on evidence development looked at the need for additional robust data to advance nuclear medicine. This effort includes goals to:

1. Determine what evidence exists to support the benefits of nuclear medicine;
2. Facilitate new evidence generation and education; and,
3. Develop appropriate use criteria for key nuclear medicine and molecular imaging indications and a validated clinical decision support tool.

After reports from the breakout groups, the discussion focused on the many points of congruence among the identified goals and on defining a set of short-term objectives. Members of each of the 3 breakout groups will meet again to plan next steps. SNMMI, MITA, and CORAR will hold teleconferences in the coming months. A second SNMMI Industry Forum was held on January 25 during the SNMMI Mid-Winter Meeting in San Antonio, TX.

Participants in the first SNMMI Industry Forum closed the session with a sense of excitement about the opportunities for collaborating more closely. This will involve working together in 2015 on the 3 priority areas, with results that will ultimately benefit patient care.

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