

Strategic Advocacy

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In my leadership updates, I will be focusing on the domains outlined in SNMMI's Value Initiative and new Strategic Plan to provide insight into how we will advance our profession through strategic efforts in each area. This month, a look at advocacy.

Our advocacy goal is to ensure that policymakers understand the contributions of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging to improving patient outcomes. To accomplish this, we must first secure the integrity of the isotope supply chain and components. Over the past couple of years, concerns have been raised about the global ^{99}Mo market. As old reactors go offline, new methods of production (that do not use highly enriched uranium) and new facilities are taking their place. Both the High-Level Group on the Security of Supply of Medical Radioisotopes (HLG-MR) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Nuclear Energy Agency and a report by the U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine have affirmed that supply should be able to meet demand going forward. Sally Schwarz, MS, RPh, serves on the HLG-MR, and our society will continue to monitor supply issues.

SNMMI will encourage individuals and companies that develop new radiotracers and radiotherapeutics to design their research and development for both the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). We will also continue to advocate for regulatory approval of emerging agents that are proven safe and effective. We will be a consistent voice with legislators and regulators on the value of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging. This year, SNMMI provided congressional testimony supporting National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding and put out a call for action to members to contact their representatives.

Appropriate reimbursement of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging procedures remains an ongoing issue, and SNMMI is working with other concerned groups to seek legislation that would improve reimbursement for expensive radiopharmaceuticals. We are organizing stakeholder meetings and joining coalitions in this multifront effort, and we are seeing progress. For members with coding and reimbursement questions, SNMMI's online Coding Corner provides up-to-date guidance.

At the state level, SNMMI has reenergized efforts. The SNMMI-TS Scope of Practice Committee is gearing up, and the Technologist Advocacy Group has passionate representatives across the country who are working for appropriate licensure laws and regulations and to stop encroachment on

the practice of nuclear medicine technology. The society also has new staff to support these efforts.

SNMMI has been actively addressing U.S. Pharmacopeia compounding issues. The society has strongly recommended that the FDA work with the U.S. Pharmacopeial Convention (USP) to develop a common understanding of activities defined and involved in the compounding of radiopharmaceuticals. We submitted comments to the FDA on the draft guidance "Compounding and Repackaging of Radiopharmaceuticals by State-Licensed Nuclear Pharmacies," and also submitted comments to USP recommending establishment of a new chapter to address ambiguity in the field of nuclear pharmacy.

As a result of these efforts, SNMMI was invited to attend a session at FDA to provide further clarification on compounding issues, and USP accepted SNMMI's recommendation to develop a separate chapter for radiopharmaceuticals. USP recently announced the prospectus for a new General Chapter <825> Compounding—Radiopharmaceuticals that will provide should be clear, effective USP public standards that meet patient and practitioner needs for compounded sterile radiopharmaceuticals. USP is currently seeking applications for a new expert panel to develop the chapter.

Finally, we must have an increased presence on Capitol Hill to educate legislators on the role of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging in providing quality health care. SNMMI has already stepped up efforts. This year, 2016-17 SNMMI President Sally Schwarz provided testimony in support of NIH funding, and our Robert E. Henkin fellows spent a week on the Hill promoting a range of issues. Plans going forward include sponsored events, educational programs, and recognition awards for those who advance legislation that supports nuclear medicine and molecular imaging.

Working together on these advocacy objectives, we can raise the profile of our field, broaden understanding of its value to patients, help safeguard the isotope supply chain, ensure that safe and effective new radiopharmaceuticals and radiotherapeutics reach the clinic, resolve pharmacopeia compounding issues, establish and clarify scope of practice and licensure requirements at the state level, and advance appropriate reimbursement for nuclear medicine and molecular imaging procedures.



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