

Wessels to Be Recognized with Loevinger–Berman Award

Roger W. Howell, PhD, and George Sgouros, PhD, on behalf of the SNMMI Medical Internal Radiation Dose Committee

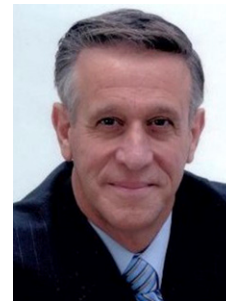
At the SNMMI Annual Meeting on June 24, 2018, in Philadelphia, PA, Barry W. Wessels, PhD, professor emeritus of radiation oncology at Case Western University (Cleveland, OH), will receive the 2018 Loevinger–Berman Award. Dr. Wessels' medical physics and radiobiology expertise is broad, spanning external-beam therapy and including protons, brachytherapy, and radiopharmaceutical therapy. It is unusual to encounter individuals well versed in all of these fields of expertise. This expertise was brought to bear in his service on the Medical Internal Radiation Dose (MIRD) Committee for 22 years, including service as vice chair.

Among the pioneers in dosimetry and radiobiology for radioimmunotherapy, Dr. Wessels stands out with numerous extramural grant awards as principal investigator, a substantial publication record, and service on major meeting and review panels on the topic. His key contributions as a member of the MIRD Committee include a critical role in *The MIRD Perspective 1999*, which changed the course of the committee from a perspective that focused only on calculation of absorbed dose to one that considered both absorbed dose and its biological consequences (*J Nucl Med.* 1999;40:3S–10S). His work in this area is broad and culminated with his leadership on MIRD Pamphlet No. 20, *The Effect of Model Assumptions on Kidney Dosimetry and Response: Implications for Radionuclide Therapy* (*J Nucl Med.* 2008;49:1884–1899), which includes a software application.

It is for these and numerous other contributions, ranging from bone marrow dosimetry and response to the consequences of nonuniform distributions of radioactivity, that Dr. Wessels will receive the 2018 Loevinger–Berman Award. This award is given annually by the SNMMI MIRD Committee in honor of Robert Loevinger, PhD, and Mones Berman, PhD, who formulated the MIRD schema for internal dose calculations. The award recognizes excellence pertaining to the field of internal dosimetry as it relates to nuclear medicine through research and/or development, significant publication contributions, or advances in the understanding of internal dosimetry in relation to risk and therapeutic efficacy.

Dr. Wessels earned his undergraduate degree in physics at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (Troy, NY) and began his career as a junior high school teacher in the Los Angeles City (CA) school district. He then went on to earn his PhD in nuclear physics at the University of Notre Dame (South Bend, IN). His career path crystallized at the University of Wisconsin (Madison), where he undertook a postdoctoral fellowship in medical physics. This led to professorships at George Washington University (Washington, DC) and Case Western University, where he served as director of the

Division of Medical Physics and Dosimetry in the Department of Radiation Oncology. Dr. Wessels has given generously of his time in participation in national and international group professional activities, including as president of the Penn–Ohio chapter of the American Association of Physicists in Medicine (AAPM) and as a member of the AAPM National Board of Directors. He has been a member of the International Commission on Radi-



Barry W. Wessels, PhD

ation Units and Measurements Nuclear Medicine Advisory Committee and the standing Committee on Systemic Therapy of the Radiation Therapy Oncology Group. In 2002 he was president of the American Board of Science in Nuclear Medicine. He has been recognized as an AAPM fellow and has been an American Board of Radiology examiner since 2005. He has mentored generations of medical and physics students and has been particularly active and successful in developing training programs and curricula for advanced degrees in medical physics and radiation sciences. Since 1971 he has authored more than 125 peer-reviewed publications and text chapters and holds 2 U.S. patents for PET and SPECT technology.

Previous recipients of the Loevinger–Berman Award were: Roger J. Cloutier (1999); Dandamudi V. Rao, PhD (2000); Keith F. Eckerman, PhD (2001); Sven-Erik Strand, PhD (2002); John W. Poston, Sr., PhD (2003); Roger W. Howell, PhD (2004); James S. Robertson, MD, PhD (2005); Gordon L. Brownell, PhD (2006); Evelyn E. Watson (2007); Harold L. Atkins, MD (2008); Stephen R. Thomas, PhD (2009); Amin I. Kassis, PhD (2010); Kenneth F. Koral, PhD (2011); John L. Humm, PhD (2012); Michael Ljungberg, PhD (2013); S. James Adelstein, MD, PhD (2014); Roger G. Dale, PhD (2015); Joseph A. O'Donoghue, PhD (2016); and Michael Lassmann, PhD (2017).

The SNMMI MIRD Committee is tasked to: (1) Develop and provide a standardized framework and methodology for calculation of internal dose quantities in nuclear medicine; (2) Compile, evaluate, and disseminate data needed to implement standardized internal dosimetry methods, including radionuclide decay properties and emissions, energy absorbed fractions, and anatomic models; (3) Collect and assess experimental and peer-reviewed data to publish dose estimate reports for selected new radiopharmaceuticals that significantly impact the current practice of nuclear medicine; (4) Provide peer-reviewed evaluations of proposed new dosimetry models and methods, including correlating dose

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Fifty Years Ago in *JNM*

In the March 1968 issue of *The Journal of Nuclear Medicine* (*JNM*; 1968;9[3]:NP), SNM president Merrill A. Bender, MD, addressed the steps the society had taken to establish an organization that could certify competence in the practice of nuclear medicine. SNM had come to a fork in the road, at which members and leadership needed to choose from a range of options, including having multiple boards incorporate distinct components of nuclear medicine in their own certification processes. In early 1968, the SNM Board of Trustees voted to establish a primary board in

nuclear medicine. In his *JNM* editorial Bender stated “We would all prefer this course of action, but it may take us many years to achieve this goal. I hope that in the interim we will not see a proliferation in the number of limited examinations given by various boards. I believe this would inevitably result in a duplication in effort and expenditure within our hospitals. I believe that centralized departments of nuclear medicine, staffed by physicians competent in all aspects of our work, have the best chance of providing the highest quality service to our patients.”

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that happens, we will be asking all SNMMI members to contact their representatives requesting cosponsoring of the bill.”

Signs of Related Relief in 2018 Congressional Budget Bill

Section 1301 of appropriations included in the 2018 Budget Bill, passed and signed into law on March 23, will reverse the decision of the CMS to take some drugs off of pass-through status effective January 1, 2018. They will return to pass-through status on October 1, 2018, through December 31, 2019. The payment rate for the APC groups will be adjusted downward to make this a revenue-neutral change. This will not affect radiopharmaceuticals that went off pass-through status earlier or those scheduled to go off pass-through status in the future. According to a press release issued by SNMMI on March 23, however, “there is hope that this action will encourage CMS to treat high-value radiopharmaceuticals better in the future.”

The law also mandates that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) study CMS’s “policy for packaging

high-cost drugs and biologicals after their pass-through status...has expired.” The study will analyze the impact of CMS’s policy on utilization of these drugs, the availability of treatment options, the resulting impacts on health outcomes, and the effect on price competition and cost sharing. The report is due to Congress no later than March 1, 2021, and should include whatever legislative and regulatory changes the GAO deems appropriate.

Munir Ghesani, MD, chair of the SNMMI Committee on Government Relations, noted that “while it is good to see Congress taking some action on this problem, much more needs to be done. CMS should stop taking radiopharmaceuticals off of pass-through status and should return to pass-through status many that were taken off earlier. The GAO study is welcome, but we hope it can be completed before 2021 as more action is needed before then.”

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with biological response for cellular, animal, and clinical trials data; (5) Address other critical and timely dosimetry issues that may impact the current practice of nuclear medicine; (6) Develop, test, and publish software and Internet tools that implement MIRD calculation models and techniques, including dose–response data and biological effective or equivalent dose quantities; and (7) Actively work with other national and international committees through joint meetings and symposia to establish uniformity in dosimetry models, techniques, named special quan-

ties, and units of dose and biological response. In addition to publishing pamphlets and reports on various internal dosimetry topics, the MIRD Committee also sponsors regular sessions at the SNMMI Annual Meeting, including continuing education offerings. Nominations for the 2019 Loevinger–Berman Award may be submitted by e-mail to gsgouros@jhmi.edu. The nominee’s CV and a cover letter, outlining why the nominee would be an appropriate candidate for the Loevinger–Berman Award should be included. The deadline for nominations is November 30, 2018.