

## Bill Targets Expanded Access to Diagnostic Radiopharmaceuticals

**O**n July 16, Representatives Scott Peters (D-CA), Bobby Rush (D-IL), and George Holding (R-NC), introduced the bipartisan Medicare Diagnostic Radiopharmaceutical Payment Equity Act of 2019 (HR 3772) in the U.S. House of Representatives. The bill would expand patient access to highly targeted precision diagnostic radiopharmaceuticals that evaluate conditions such as Alzheimer disease, Parkinson disease, and some cancers. The bill is intended to ensure that patients have faster and more reliable access to optimal treatments and calls for all diagnostic radiopharmaceuticals that reach a cost of >\$500 per day to be paid separately in the Hospital Outpatient Prospective Payment System.

In 2008, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services began treating diagnostic radiopharmaceuticals as supplies instead of drugs, bundling or “packaging” them with the cost of their associated procedures in hospital outpatient settings. This decision created a reimbursement structure that limited patient access to innovative diagnostic tools and, in many cases, discouraged the development and introduction of new agents. The new bill would ensure that hospitals receive adequate Medicare reimbursement to cover the high-value, low-volume diagnostic radiopharmaceuticals that are used in these nuclear medicine procedures, correcting a flawed payment philosophy and leaving hospitals free to perform the nuclear medicine procedures that patients need.

On the day after the introduction of the bill, SNMMI hosted a briefing on Capitol Hill with clinicians, patients, and industry representatives to discuss the importance of advocating for and passing the legislation. Speakers included Vasken Dilsizian, MD, SNMMI president; Josh Mailman, MBA, chair of the SNMMI Patient Advocacy Advisory Board and president of NorCal CarciNET Community; and Terri Wilson, senior director of patient access and health care policy at Blue Earth Diagnostics, Ltd. and chair of the Medical Imaging and Technology Alliance PET Group. Michael J. Guastella, MS, MBA, executive director of the Council on Radionuclides and Radiopharmaceuticals, Inc. opened the meeting and introduced the speakers. The full proceedings of the meeting are available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EgvoSRRvKDo>.

Dilsizian noted the challenges that rapidly evolving knowledge and innovative tracers face in the current restrictive environment. “Diagnostic radiopharmaceuticals are incredibly effective in the diagnosis of a number of different



**Standing: SNMMI President Vasken Dilsizian, MD; Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD); Sukhjeet Ahuja, MD, MS; Ira Goldman (Lantheus Medical Imaging); and, seated, Rosemary Cioti (Facing Our Risk of Cancer Empowered, Inc.) at the Capitol Hill meeting on HR 3772.**

diseases, including prostate cancer, Alzheimer and Parkinson disease, and others,” he said. “We’ve really only scratched the surface of potential with these technologies, and I expect we’ll see future improvements in these diagnostic tools if policy is adjusted to better reflect patient need.”

As a neuroendocrine tumor patient, Mailman offered a patient perspective on the benefits of radiopharmaceutical imaging. “Having advanced imaging available for neuroendocrine tumor patients is critical, as these advancements have helped clinicians determine the location and extent of disease so they can better plan appropriate therapy for improved patient outcomes,” he said.

Wilson summarized the provisions of HR 3772 and described the ways in which it would eliminate specific restrictions now in place. “All patients should have access to the right tests as requested by their physicians to help provide the answers they need,” she concluded.

After the congressional briefing, SNMMI members met with Representatives and staff in >40 congressional offices, asking for support for HR 3772. SNMMI also announced a letter writing campaign and asked patients and the nuclear medicine and molecular imaging community to participate. For more information, contact Dalton Clark, manager of government affairs for SNMMI ([dclark@snmmi.org](mailto:dclark@snmmi.org)).

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