2019 SNMMI Highlights Lecture: Oncology and Therapy

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From the Newsline Editor: The Highlights Lecture, presented at the closing session of each SNMMI Annual Meeting, was originated and presented for more than 30 years by Henry N. Wagner, Jr., MD. Beginning in 2010, the duties of summarizing selected significant presentations at the meeting were divided annually among 4 distinguished nuclear and molecular medicine subject matter experts. Each year Newsline publishes these lectures and selected images. The 2019 Highlights Lectures were delivered on June 25 at the SNMMI Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, PA. In this issue we feature the first part of the lecture by Andrew Scott, MD, Director, Department of Molecular Imaging and Therapy, and Head, Tumour Targeting Laboratory, Olivia Newton-John Cancer Research Institute, Austin Health (Melbourne, Australia), who spoke on oncology highlights from the meeting. Part 2 will appear in the February 2020 issue of Newsline. Note that in the following presentation summary, numerals in brackets represent abstract numbers as published in The Journal of Nuclear Medicine (2019;60 [suppl 1]).

t is an honor to be here to give the Oncology and Therapy Highlights of the 2019 SNMMI Meeting. At the 2019 meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), which was held 3 weeks ago in Chicago (IL), a number of presentations focused on what were considered to be the major advances in oncology in the last 12 months. Progress in rare cancers was named the ASCO Clinical Advance for 2019 (https://www.asco.org/research-progress/ reports-studies/clinical-cancer-advances-2019/clinical-canceradvances-2019-glance). Of the 5 cited principal areas of major progress in rare cancers for the last year, one was a nuclear medicine therapy, the first in more than 30 years: ¹⁷⁷Lu-DOTATATE in somatostatin receptor-positive midgut neuroendocrine tumors. This is a reflection of the profile that nuclear medicine is achieving in the oncology community. As a consequence, these are exciting times as we move forward with new diagnostics and therapeutics. As part of their review, ASCO also announced what they considered to be the great challenges in oncology across the world and identified new research priorities to meet these challenges, including:

- Identifying strategies that better predict response to immunotherapies;
- Better defining patient populations that benefit from postoperative (adjuvant) therapy;
- Translating innovations in cellular therapies to solid tumors;
- Increasing precision medicine research and treatment approaches in pediatric cancers; and

• Increasing equitable access to cancer clinical trials.

Most of these priorities are, in fact, related to work that is currently being done in nuclear medicine, particularly in research on strategies that better predict response to immunotherapies and predictive factors for response to adjuvant therapy. In addition, we have the capability to assist with development of cellular



Andrew Scott, MD

therapies. We are supported in this effort by our expertise and experience in clinical precision medicine and access to cancer clinical trials. Over the last few years in nuclear medicine globally we have seen a marked increase in adoption and progress of clinical trials, particularly in oncology. We are therefore quite well positioned, strategically, to move the field forward.

One of the challenges when reviewing Oncology and Therapy abstracts at the SNMMI meeting is that they constitute a very large proportion of all abstracts presented. Oncology was the focus of 696 presentations, or 53% of all scientific abstracts. Fewer than 3% could be covered in this presentation, and I apologize that I was not able to present on every abstract. Presenters this year came from 34 countries. Of those focusing on clinical therapy and diagnosis, 80% came from outside the United States. Of those focusing on basic and translational oncology topics, 64% came from outside the United States. These statistics highlight the global influence of the SNMMI meeting.

In this lecture, I will be touching on 5 main themes that I think encompass the principal areas of focus at this meeting from a diagnostic and therapeutic oncology perspective. These are: novel molecular imaging probes; immunooncology, which is such an important advance in the treatment of many types of cancers; molecular imaging in treatment response assessment; prostate cancer, which has such a very strong focus within nuclear medicine at the moment in imaging and theranostics; and novel therapeutics and trials.

Novel Molecular Imaging Probes

When thinking about novel imaging probes, it is important to think holistically as to what is the nature of a cancer and what it is about a cancer that actually causes it to grow in an unrestricted way and allows it to metastasize. This provides context to the targets and the metabolic processes for which we can evaluate. It is in that context that I encourage you to always think of a cancer not merely as a group of cells but also to also consider the tumor microenvironment. Novel targets for imaging probes may involve tumor cells (e.g., cell surface receptors, signaling pathways, and metabolic processes), the tumor supporting structures (e.g., vasculature, lymphatics, extracellular matrix, and fibroblasts), and cellular infiltrates (which can be inflammatory, immune activating, immune suppressive, or bone marrow derived). Changes in the microenvironment can impact responses to standard chemotherapies, biologic therapies, and immunotherapy. Two of the key components of the tumor microenvironment are fibroblasts and extracellular matrix, which form the basic structure from which small tumors grow, and which is essential for metastatic lesions to grow beyond small cell clusters.

Giesel et al. from University Hospital Heidelberg and the Nationale Centrum für Tumorerkrankungen Heidelberg (Germany) reported on "Intensity of tracer uptake in FAPI-PET/CT in different kinds of cancer" [289]. These researchers have introduced a revolutionary approach to the targeting of cancers through identifying a small molecule that can bind to fibroblast activation protein (FAP), which is expressed on activated fibroblasts within the marker environment of cancers. FAP was first reported more than 25 years ago as part of a program to identify new targets in the microenvironment of cancers. Although prior clinical studies have evaluated antibodies against FAP, the small molecule that this group has generated and labeled with ⁶⁸Ga has shown remarkable imaging results across a broad range of cancer types. The main tumor type that typically expresses FAP is soft tissue sarcomas (and only a portion of those), so it is clear that this tracer is targeting fibroblasts in the tumor microenvironment. The spectrum of tumor types showing uptake of the FAP tracer can be seen in Figure 1, highlighting the potential for FAP targeting and imaging, which may also lead in the future to opportunities for new therapies. This image was named the 2019 SNMMI Image of the

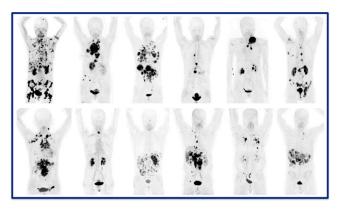


FIGURE 1. ⁶⁸Ga-FAPI PET/CT in patients reflecting 12 different tumor entities. Top row, left to right: breast cancer, non–small cell lung cancer, colorectal cancer, pancreatic cancer, carcinoma of unknown primary, and prostate cancer. Bottom row, left to right: ovarian cancer, esophageal cancer, small intestine cancer, cholangiocarcinoma, sarcoma, and gastroenteropancreatic neuroendocrine tumor. This image was named the 2019 SNMMI Image of the Year, not only for the results in a wide range of cancers but for the potential of FAP-targeted diagnostics to enhance identification of appropriate patients for specific treatments.

Year, not only for the results in a wide range of cancers but for the potential of FAP-targeted diagnostics to serve as a predictive biomarker, enhancing identification of appropriate patients for specific treatments.

FAP expression is also present in wound healing and in fibrotic conditions. Röhrich et al. from the Charité Universitätsmedizin Berlin (Heidelberg, Germany) and the Universitätsklinik Heidelberg (Germany) reported on "Fibroblast activation protein-specific PET/CT imaging in idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis with lung cancer" [298]. These researchers explored imaging results in pulmonary fibrosis in 9 patients with interstitial lung disease (ILD) and lung cancer and also evaluated a mouse model of ILD (Fig. 2). Dynamic uptake curves were evaluated in blood pool and areas of fibrosis and tumor. Fibrosis showed rapid plateauing of uptake, which slowly declined with time; however, tumor uptake showed a gradual progressive increase in uptake and then gradual decline, clearly indicating a potential kinetic difference between benign fibrotic conditions and cancer. As these conditions can overlap in patients, this information is very important in assisting with appropriate diagnosis.

Ulaner et al. from Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (New York, NY) reported on "89Zr-trastuzumab PET/CT for prediction of response to HER2-targeted therapy in patients with HER2 mutant lung cancer: An exploratory phase 2 trial" [144]. They looked at ⁸⁹Zr-trastuzumab targeting as an immunoPET tracer and biomarker to predict response to trastuzumab emtamzine (T-DM1) therapy. T-DM1 treatment is U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved in HER2-positive breast cancer. In this study they focused on HER2-positive lung cancer patients to see whether imaging could predict potential response to T-DM1 treatment. In the patient shown in Figure 3, uptake of the antibody is seen within the area of the tumor in the right lung, in comparison to the metabolic uptake of ¹⁸F-FDG before and after T-DM1 therapy. The uptake of the ⁸⁹Zrtrastuzumab tracer itself was very predictive of response to

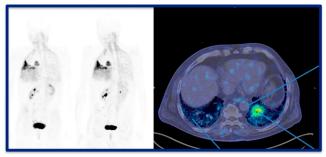


FIGURE 2. FAP-specific PET/CT in pulmonary fibrosis with lung cancer. Left: Tracer uptake in a patient with idiopathic lung fibrosis at 10 and 60 min after injection. Right: PET/CT of pulmonary fibrosis, used to generate dynamic curves for perfusion, fibrosis, and tumor. The perfusion curve (not pictured) showed the classic washout of a small molecule. Fibrosis rapidly plateaued and then slowly declined. Tumor uptake, however, showed a gradual progressive increase and then gradual decline, clearly indicating a potential kinetic difference between benign fibrotic conditions and cancer.

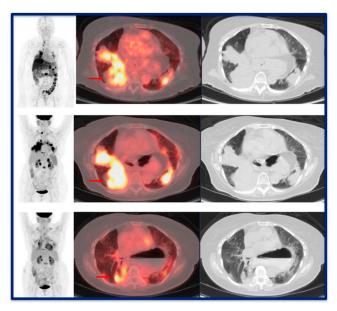


FIGURE 3. ⁸⁹Zr-trastuzumab PET/CT for prediction of response to trastuzumab emtamzine (T-DM1) therapy in patients with HER2 positive lung cancer. PET images acquired with: (top row) pretreatment ⁸⁹Zr-trastuzumab, demonstrating tracer-avid lung malignancy (arrow); (middle row) pretreatment ¹⁸F-FDG PET demonstrating an ¹⁸F-FDG-avid right lung malignancy (arrow); and (bottom row) ¹⁸F-FDG PET acquired 8 weeks after initiation of HER2-targeted therapy demonstrating a partial metabolic response (arrow). Uptake of ⁸⁹Zr-trastuzumab was highly predictive of response to T-DM1 therapy.

T-DM1 therapy. These types of biomarker studies are essential if we are going to understand the best way to select patients for this type of treatment. This is an innovative study, and I commend this group for using a theranostic approach to understand the way that antibody drug conjugate therapies may work in patients.

Kang et al. from Peking University First Hospital (Beijing, China), the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and the Shanghai Jiao Tong University Affiliated Sixth People's Hospital (China) reported on "64Cu-labeled F(ab')₂ fragments of daratumumab for early visualization of CD38positive lymphoma" [350]. These researchers generated $F(ab')_2$ fragments of an antibody that binds to CD38, which is expressed in a large proportion of lymphomas. They labeled these antibody fragments with ⁶⁴Cu and, in mouse models of lymphoma, were able to show very high uptake extending for up to 48 hours (Fig. 4), compared to uptake in controls and also to the intact antibody. We know that $F(ab')_2$ fragments have faster blood clearance, and, therefore, tumorto-blood ratios can be improved. This is an elegant way to demonstrate a probe that could potentially be used to predict responsiveness to this CD38 treatment approach.

Urothelial bladder cancer (UBC) can present diagnostic challenges. We know that ¹⁸F-FDG studies are problematic in UBC because of normal renal tracer excretion. Thakur et al. from Thomas Jefferson University/Hospital (Philadelphia, PA), Johns Hopkins Medicine (Baltimore, MD), and

Kahramanmaras Sutcu Imam University (Turkey) reported on "PET imaging of urothelial bladder cancer: Addressing an unmet need" [502]. This group hypothesized that vasoactive intestinal peptide and pituitary adenylate cyclase-activating peptide receptors expressed in high density on UBC cells can be targeted by PET to identify locoregional disease and metastatic lesions. They used the TP3805 molecule labeled with ⁶⁴Cu in 15 patients diagnosed with invasive UBC scheduled for radical cystectomy. Presurgical images were compared with surgical pathology. As seen in the patient study in Figure 5, they were able to demonstrate remarkable images of tracer uptake in the bladder tumor. In this study the tracer showed 91% sensitivity, 100% specificity, 100% positive predictive value, and 80% negative predictive value. I like this study, because it shows an innovative approach to a common clinical question that is quite difficult to address. This first-in-human study of UBC imaging provides data that point to possible future applications in therapy.

In a cohort of patients with a very complex clinical condition, multiple endocrine neoplasia type 1 (MEN-1), Antwi and colleagues from the Hôpital Bicêtre University (Paris, France), Lille University Hospital (France), the University of Bern (Switzerland), University Hospital Basel (Switzerland), and the Royal Free Hospital (London, UK) reported that "68Ga-exendin-4 PET/CT detects insulinomas in patients with hypoglycemia in multiple endocrine neoplasia type 1" [477]. They developed a ⁶⁸Ga-labeled probe against the glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor (GLP-1R) and were able to show quite exquisite uptake within very small lesions (Fig. 6). Using both PET and MR together, they were able to identify very small insulinomas in patients with endogenous hyperinsulinemic hypoglycemia in whom standard anatomic imaging had great difficulty in identifying the state of disease. In this context and in this particular cancer type, this provides an opportunity to markedly improve our accuracy in staging this disease. The authors concluded that GLP-1R PET/CT can not only selectively identify insulinomas among multiple pancreatic neuroendocrine tumors in patients with MEN-1, but that, in combination with MR, it has the potential to guide surgical procedures and avoid unnecessary pancreatic resections, a result that could render "blind" pancreatic resections obsolete. This was a very interesting study that I hope will be extended into larger, multicenter studies in the future.

Immunooncology

Immunooncology remains one of the most important new treatments in cancer care. Those of us who are imaging oncology patients on a routine basis will be seeing more and more patients who are being treated with immune checkpoint therapy. A broad range of targets and therapeutic antibodies are now approved (Table 1), aiming to release the normal immune system response to cancer by targeting immune checkpoints that exist within tumors. In the programmed cell death–1 protein/programmed death ligand–1

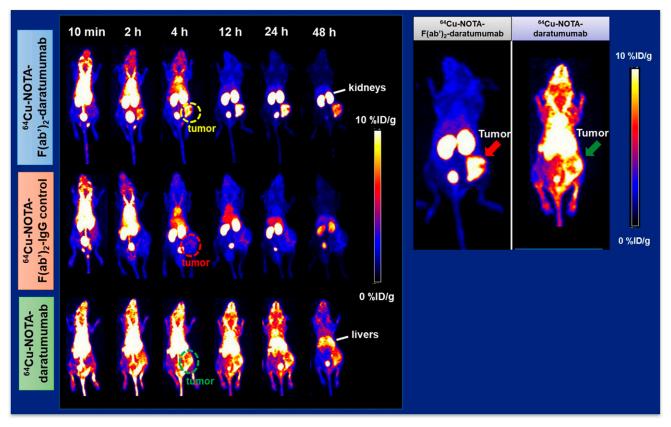


FIGURE 4. ⁶⁴Cu-labeled F(ab')₂ fragments of daratumumab for early visualization of CD38-positive lymphoma. Left block: Imaging at 10 minutes and 2, 4, 12, 24, and 48 hours with ⁶⁴Cu-NOTA-F(ab')₂ daratumumab (top row); ⁶⁴Cu-NOTA-F(ab')₂-IgG (control) (middle row); and ⁶⁴Cu-NOTA-daratumumab (bottom row). Right block: Enlarged focus on difference in imaging results at 12 hours with ⁶⁴Cu-NOTA- F(ab')₂ daratumumab (left) and ⁶⁴Cu-NOTA-daratumumab (right). This probe has potential usefulness in predicting responsiveness to CD38 treatment approaches.

(PD-1/PD-L1) space alone, an enormous amount of clinical activity is already underway. In a recent review article, Tang et al. (*Nature*. 2018;17:854–855) reported that more than 2,250 active trials are currently exploring therapy with PD-1/PD-L1 inhibitors. These trials do not just focus on PD1/PD-L1 antibodies alone, and many trials are evaluating their effects in combination with different antibodies, chemotherapy, and other therapeutics.

The complexity of the immune response to these agents, often amplified in combination treatment studies, creates significant challenges in interpreting both therapeutic responses and toxicities. This is also the case because, despite the fact that remarkable responses are being achieved in many individuals, not all patients respond to treatment, and responses also vary depending on the type of cancer. Moreover, combined immune checkpoint therapy, for example PD-1 and CTLA-4 inhibitors together, can be delivered to increase response but with markedly increased toxicity. Assessment of response is also challenging because true assessment may take time, and patients can appear to get worse before they actually respond. Toxicity profiles can be complex, and patients may present with changes on imaging studies before these are evident clinically, which means that we must focus more closely on the ways in which we

analyze and assess these patients. Most of these patients will be coming to nuclear medicine for ¹⁸F-FDG PET scans as part of their staging, and they will have many scans during their treatment course.

Molecular Imaging of Response to Immunotherapy

Iravani et al. from the Peter MacCallum Cancer Center (Melbourne, Australia) and St. Louis University (MO) reported on "Response assessment and immune-related adverse events as detected by FDG PET/CT in patients treated with combined CTLA-4 and PD-1 checkpoint inhibitors as first-line therapy in advanced melanoma" [647]. This group has made a number of important observations. Most adverse events tended to occur fairly early in treatment but could also occur quite late. Of note, up to 40% of immunerelated adverse events were detected by ¹⁸F-FDG PET/CT before these presented clinically. We are all familiar with the types of immune-response adverse events that can occur, and it is very important that we are familiar with the patterns of imaging abnormalities in order to provide accurate information to our oncology colleagues who are treating these patients.

A range of criteria have been reported to interpret ¹⁸F-FDG PET in immune checkpoint therapy. In a recent article

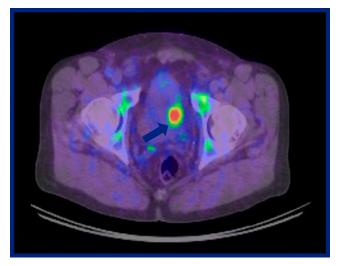


FIGURE 5. PET imaging of urothelial bladder cancer (UBC). ⁶⁴Cu-TP3805 was used to target vasoactive intestinal peptide and pituitary adenylate cyclase–activating peptide (VPAC) receptors expressed in high density on UBC cells, for identification of locoregional disease and metastatic lesions. Tracer uptake in UBC (arrow) was clearly evident. This was a first-in-human study of UBC imaging targeting VPAC receptors and provided data that point to possible future applications in therapy.

published in the European Journal of Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging (2019;46:238-250), Aide et al. reviewed the literature and detailed a number of immunerelated reporting schemes that can be used to interpret ¹⁸F-FDG PET in patients undergoing immune checkpoint therapy. Additional refinement of such criteria was reported at this meeting by Ito et al. from the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (New York, NY), the National Cancer Center Hospital (Tokyo, Japan), and the Technical University of Munich (Germany), who looked at "18F-FDG PET/CT for monitoring immunotherapy with PD-1 blockade in patients with advanced melanoma" [645]. The study included 83 patients who were treated with PD-1 blockade (nivolumab plus ipilimumab [n = 28] and pembrolizumab [n = 55]) and who underwent PET/CT imaging before and after treatment. Imaging results were assessed using both PET Response Criteria in Solid Tumors (PERCIST) and immune PERCIST (imPERCIST), summing lean body mass-corrected SUV (SUL_{peak}) in up to 5 lesions with the highest ¹⁸F-FDG uptake. Of note is that for imPERCIST the appearance of new tracer-avid lesions alone was not considered to be progressive metabolic disease (PMD). By PERCIST, 13 patients showed complete metabolic response, 25 showed partial metabolic response (PMR), 6 showed stable metabolic disease (SMD), and 39 showed PMD. When new lesions were not considered to represent PMD, the number of patients with PMD by imPERCIST decreased by 18 (shifted to 12 PMR and 6 SMD). Both assessment techniques were significantly associated with overall survival, and 2-year survival rates were quite similar between the groups as assessed by PERCIST and imPERCIST. This

means we must be very careful when looking at new lesions to interpret them within the context of whether they are the result of immune-related adverse events or are truly representative of progressive disease. The clinical status of these patients often becomes a critical part of that interpretation.

As the current generation of CTLA-4, PD-1, and PD-L1 inhibitors are now being extensively used, a large group of second- and third-generation immunooncology drugs are being introduced in trials that are aiming not merely to target immune checkpoints but also to dampen the immunesuppressive environment within a cancer. This is being done by exploring the range of cellular infiltrates within specific cancers that can repress immune response, as well as other microenvironment factors. The tumor microenvironment is linked to the host immune response and to response to immunooncology drugs. Modulation of the microenvironment and immune-suppressive cells can enhance immune checkpoint therapy. Imaging of the immune environment provides important information on prognosis, prediction of response, and resistance to therapy.

Nigam et al. from the University of Pittsburgh (PA) provided a very interesting study on "Development of myeloid-derived suppressor cell (MDSC)–CD11b tracer for

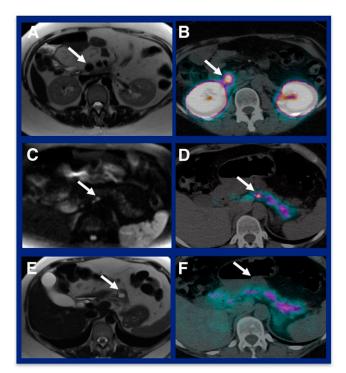


FIGURE 6. Glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor (GLP-1R) imaging in 3 patients with multiple endocrine neoplasia type 1 (MEN-1). MR (A) and MR plus ⁶⁸Ga-exendin-4 PET (B) showed an insulinoma \geq 2 cm. (D) MR plus ⁶⁸Ga-exendin-4 PET showed an insulinoma <2 cm that was missed on MR alone (C). (F) MR plus ⁶⁸Ga-exendin-4 PET showed a nonfunctional neuroendocrine tumor that was indeterminate on MR (E). GLP-1R PET/CT may not only selectively identify insulinomas among multiple pancreatic neuroendocrine tumors in patients with MEN-1 but, in combination with MR, has the potential to guide surgical procedures and avoid unnecessary pancreatic resections.

 TABLE 1

 Approved Immunooncology Drugs

Therapy type	Therapy name	Company	Target
Immune checkpoint	Ipilimumab	Bristol-Myers Squibb	CTLA-4
	Nivolumab	Myers Squibb	PD-1
	Pembrolizumab	Merck	PD-1
	Atezolizumab	Roche/Genentech	PD-L1
	Avelumab	Merck KGaA	PD-L1
	Durvalumab	AstraZeneca/Medimmune	PD-L1
T-cell therapy	Tisagenlecleucel	Novartis AG	CD19
	Axicabtagene ciloleucel	Gilead	CD19
CD3-bispecific	Blinatumomab	Amgen	CD19, CD3

Adapted from Tang J, Shalabi A, Hubbard-Lucey VM, "Comprehensive analysis of the clinical immune-oncology landscape" (*Ann Oncol.* 2018;29[1]:84–91), and used here with permission from Oxford University Press.

immune PET imaging in a glioblastoma model" [1035]. They generated an antibody that bound to mouse human CD11b, which is expressed on MDSCs. These are bone marrow–derived cells that migrate into tumors and populate the microenvironment and may be responsible for suppressing an immune response, and therefore impact on the effectiveness of immunooncology drugs. In this study an orthotopic model of glioma was evaluated (Fig. 7). High uptake of a zirconium-labeled antibody against MDSCs was shown, which is an elegant demonstration of the ability to identify microenvironment suppressive cells. The authors concluded that this immunoPET approach has the ability to quantify MDSCs and tumor-associated macrophages at the tumor site and allows for better patient stratification for

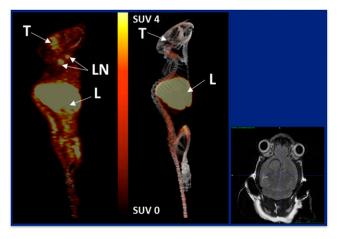


FIGURE 7. Imaging myeloid-derived suppressor cell (MDSC)– CD11b receptors in gliomas. Left block: ⁸⁹Zr-CD11b mAb PET/ CT imaging of (left) an orthotopic mouse model of glioma 72 hours after injection and (right) imaging with a blocking dose (yielding 10-fold lower specific activity). Right image: MR imaging of a GL261 glioma in the right brain. This tracer has the potential to quantify MDSCs and tumor-associated macrophages at the tumor site and allow for better patient stratification for immunotherapy and monitoring of targeted treatment response.

immunotherapy and monitoring of targeted treatment response. I hope this group will be able to extend these studies into humans in the near future.

A very nice study was reported by Kumar et al. from Johns Hopkins Medicine (Baltimore, MD), who described "A PET imaging strategy to quantify the residence time and kinetics of antibody therapeutics at the tumor" [211]. These researchers developed a high-affinity 14-amino acid human-specific PD-L1–binding cyclic peptide labeled with ¹⁸F (¹⁸F-DK222). They evaluated uptake of this tracer in mice with syngeneic tumors treated with different types of PD-L1 inhibitors. After tracer injection, they saw exquisite uptake in tumors, which was reduced in mice treated with PD-L1 inhibitors. Durvalumab, which has a higher affinity to PD-L1, was shown to have a longer duration of activity compared with some of the other PD-L1 inhibitors (Fig. 8). These data led to the authors' conclusion that "Target engagement



FIGURE 8. High-affinity 14-amino acid human-specific PD-L1– binding cyclic peptide (¹⁸F-DK222) imaging of tumors in mice with syngeneic tumors at (top row) 24 and (bottom row) 96 hours after treatment initiation. Left to right: controls, nivolumab-treated, atezolizumab-treated, avelumab-treated, and durvalumab-treated mice. Durvalumab had a longer duration of activity compared with other PD-L1 inhibitors. This suggests a future ability to image PD-L1 in a way that predicts response to these immunooncology drugs.

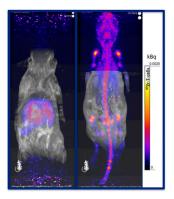


FIGURE 9. PET/MR imaging of T cell biodistribution in treatment-naïve mice after adoptive cell transfer. Biodistribution and organ uptake studies showed that both primary human and mouse T cells have similar spatial and temporal biodistribution for up to 1 week after ⁸⁹Zr-labeled tracer injection. This provides a technique for quantifying adoptively transferred T cells in vivo. Left: MR maximum intensity projection image

after injection of 89 Zr-labeled T cells. Right: After injection of 89 Zr-[oxinate]₄ only.

and tumor residence kinetics of different monoclonal antibodies targeting PD-L1 can be quantified noninvasively at the tumor and independently of the biophysical properties and pharmacokinetics of the monoclonal antibodies." This opens the possibility that we may be able to image PD-L1 in a way that predicts the ability of these immunooncology drugs to cause responses in patients. As I mentioned earlier, this is one of the grand challenges that has been identified for the oncology field in the next few years.

Maria et al. from the University of Southern California Keck School of Medicine (Los Angeles) reported on "Simultaneous PET/MRI measurement of primary T cell biodistribution in naïve mice following adoptive cell transfer" [277]. These researchers asked whether there is a difference in biodistribution between trafficking of primary human T-cells in naïve NOD scid IL-2R-gamma (NSG) mice and primary mouse T cells in naïve Balb/c mice. Animals underwent simultaneous PET/MR imaging up to 5 days after injection of ⁸⁹Zr-labeled T cells (Fig. 9), tissues and organs of interest were dissected, and their activity was measured using a gamma counter to validate PET quantification. The conclusion was that, based on biodistribution imaging as well as measured organ uptake, both primary human and mouse T cells have similar spatial and temporal biodistribution for up to 1 week after intravenous injection. This provides a technique for quantifying adoptively transferred

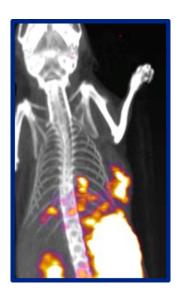


FIGURE 10. Granzyme B PET imaging to track T cells in response to immunotherapy. PET/CT imaging with a probe against granzyme B was acquired in mice bearing CT26 or MC38 syngeneic tumors at 6 or 12 days after initiation of a combined immune checkpoint anti-PD-1 plus anti-CTLA-4 therapy. Granzyme B PET identified immune phenotypes associated with response to immunotherapy.

T cells in vivo using ⁸⁹Zr PET, which could potentially be extended into human studies.

Larimer et al. from the Massachusetts General Hospital (Charlestown) reported that "Granzyme B PET imaging permits stratified ex vivo analysis to better understand response to immunotherapy" [275] and provided important insights into the way in which the activation of T cells can be tracked by PET. They used PET/CT imaging (Fig. 10) with a probe against granzyme B in mice bearing CT26 or MC38 syngeneic tumors at 6 or 12 days after initiation of combined immune checkpoint anti-PD-1 plus anti-CTLA-4 therapy. Three-dimensional regions of interest were drawn to calculate tumor-to-blood ratios. Imaging and additional ex vivo single-cell aggregation studies and cytokine-based analyses showed a direct relationship between CD8 T cells within tumors and within draining lymph nodes as a correlate to granzyme-B uptake and the activation of T cells within these tissues. These data provide an important scientific foundation for the use of this probe as a way of looking at activated T cells in human trials and potentially predicting response to immunooncology drugs.

[This highlight lecture will continue in the February 2020 issue of Newsline.]

The Key to the Future: Reaching Out Early to Medical Students

Vasken Dilsizian, MD, SNMMI President

When I ask faculty colleagues and residents how they chose nuclear medicine and molecular imaging as a specialty, the answers range across training settings but seem to boil down to a single factor: exposure. Almost every person reports early exposure to the field, especially through direct, hands-on research or clinical experience, and/or the influence of a mentor or mentors who took the time and effort to introduce them to the promise of nuclear medicine practice. Moreover, in almost every case, the decision to pursue a career in nuclear medicine came well before the end of medical school training.

The challenges are clear. In the United States, the numbers of newly trained nuclear medicine physicians are not matching the pace of retirement and attrition in the field. The result is that we must find new and effective ways to reach out not only to U.S. medical students but to the best and brightest from other countries—and do so as early as possible in their training. However, medical school curricula are tightly organized, with few prolonged opportunities for individual engagement, as well as requirements that vary from institution to institution.

How, then, can we connect with medical students to give them early exposure to the rapidly growing clinical and research opportunities in nuclear medicine? At SNMMI, we have taken a step through the Workforce Pipeline Domain of the Value Initiative by changing the society's bylaws to include a membership category for medical students. SNMMI is also advertising and marketing directly to medical students in new ways. Student inclusion as in-training members will expand their knowledge about the society and the profession in general, as well as offer opportunities to attend meetings and seminars. SNMMI "Chapter Champions" are also working to create new resources for medical students and residents on a regional basis.

Opportunities at the local and institutional level are many but will require focused effort and collaboration with medical schools and leadership. In an ideal world, we could require that student radiology rotations include 1 week of nuclear medicine, but lack of uniformity in requirements among institutions and likely objections from some radiology departments might make this difficult.

The most obvious outreach effort involves identifying ways to bring medical students in for research experiences within the nuclear medicine setting. These are bright young people, and the best way to engage them is to appeal to their intellects and interests. Many of the best medical students have previous training in biochemistry and physiology, and nuclear medicine and molecular imaging offer unique opportunities to expand on these interests.

At my institution, the University of Maryland School of Medicine (Baltimore), upper-level leadership understand the need

to expose students early in their training to experiences that not only appeal to their interests but provide opportunities for research, presentation, and publication. Our 10-week summer Program for Research Initiated by Students and Mentors (PRISM) is designed to encourage students between their first and second years to consider careers that include biomedical or clinical research and/or academic medicine and provide a realistic understanding of the medical research environment.



Vasken Dilsizian, MD, SNMMI President

Faculty members reach out to students to create a well-planned 10-week research project and then identify collaborators, facilitate access to special lecture series, and follow up through presentation of results. The PRISM initiative funds fellowships for these students, with many departments offering supplementary funding to effectively "compete" for the best students. The result has been not only successful research exposure but collaborations between students and mentors that extend throughout the medical school years and directly influence the choice of specialty.

SNMMI, as a professional society, is making broad efforts to expand our outreach and offerings to medical students. SNMMI leadership understands the importance of investing in the future of our field through engaging these students. Related details will be available on the SNMMI website (www.snmmi.org) in the coming months.

Individual efforts at the local level will be required to effectively attract and "grow" the next generation of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging physicians. I challenge all nuclear medicine and molecular imaging faculty members to find out what institutional resources are available for student research, consider dedicating internal funds for research experiences for deserving students, designate a nuclear medicine point person to head up this effort, engage the best subject-matter mentors, and ensure that students feel welcome and appreciated in our field. I would also encourage consideration of programs that provide research experiences for students from countries outside the United States. Reaching out as early as possible in the medical career to provide a positive image of our field and first-hand experience with skilled mentors will reward us in the future with a capable workforce ready to meet the demands of our rapidly growing place in medical science and practice.

ACMUI Membership

The Advisory Committee on the Medical Uses of Isotopes (ACMUI) earlier this year appointed new members and officers to serve as advisors to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) on policy and technical issues in the regulation of the medical uses of radioactive material in diagnosis and therapy. ACMUI membership includes health care professionals representing key roles in various disciplines, including a nuclear medicine physician, a nuclear cardiologist, a medical physicist in nuclear medicine unsealed byproduct material, a medical physicist in radiation therapy, a radiation safety officer, a nuclear pharmacist, 2 radiation oncologists, a patients' rights advocate, a U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) representative, an Agreement State representative, a health care administrator, and a diagnostic radiologist. Members comment on changes to NRC regulations and guidance; evaluate certain nonroutine uses of radioactive material; provide technical assistance in licensing, inspection, and enforcement cases; and bring key issues to the attention of the NRC for appropriate action.

Recent changes in the board include the appointment of Darlene F. Metter, MD (a member since 2016), as ACMUI chair and diagnostic radiology representative, and A. Robert Schleipman, PhD (a member since 2018), as vice chair and health care administration representative. New members include Hossein Jadvar, MD, PhD, MPH, MBA, nuclear medicine physician, and Harvey B. Wolkov, MD, radiation oncology physician. The remaining members of the committee are Gary Bloom, patients' rights advocate; Vasken Dilsizian, MD, nuclear cardiologist; Ronald D. Ennis, MD, radiation oncologist: Richard L. Green, nuclear pharmacist; Melissa C. Martin, MS, medical physicist, nuclear medicine; Michael D. O'Hara, PhD, FDA representative; Zoubir Ouhib, MS, medical physicist, therapy; Michael Sheetz, MS, radiation safety officer; and Megan L. Shober, agreement state representative.

Membership in the ACMUI is gained through a formal nomination and selection process. Members are appointed to 4-y terms and, with NRC approval, may elect to serve up to 2 consecutive terms, for a maximum term of 8 y.

ACMUI

NCD for Cardiac PET

On November 15, SNMMI announced that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) had agreed that National Coverage Decisions (NCDs) for cardiac PET should include quantitative myocardial blood flow assessment. Specifically, after reviewing the NCDs for PET for Myocardial Perfusion and PET for Myocardial Viability, CMS clarified that PET quantitative myocardial blood flow is coverable under these NCDs. Both SNMMI and the American Society of Nuclear Cardiology and their memberships have been active in the effort to secure this determination. Additional information will appear on the SNMMI website at www.snmmi.org.

SNMMI

CMS Final 2020 MPFS and HOPPS Rules

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released its 2020 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS) final rule and 2020 Hospital Outpatient Prospective Payment System (HOPPS) final rule on November 1, with positive news for the nuclear medicine community. The proposed 2020 MPFS and HOPPS rules, released in July, included changes that could have seriously affected reimbursement for nuclear medicine and molecular imaging procedures. In brief, the final rule now indicates that rather than facing technical component cuts of as much as 80% to myocardial PET reimbursement, the technical component will continue to be paid according to contractor pricing in 2020. Instead of a 157% decrease in reimbursement for some SPECT and SPECT/CT studies, a 3.5% increase in reimbursement is included in the final rule.

This turnaround was in large part the result of coordinated efforts by the nuclear medicine community and associated professional societies. Over the summer and early fall, SNMMI met with CMS to discuss the impact of proposed policy changes on nuclear medicine and molecular imaging services and submitted extensive comments to the agency. SNMMI also worked actively with the American College of Cardiology, American College of Nuclear Medicine, the American Society of Nuclear Cardiology, the Cardiology Advocacy Alliance, and other stakeholders to compile detailed comments on MPFS and HOPPS. SNMMI members responded to calls for comments to CMS on the potential impact on care of their patients, with many suppling invoices from their practices to indicate the actual costs of making services available to patients. SNMMI detailed the specifics of other major successes resulting from these efforts for both the MPFS and HOPPS final rules.

On December 5, SNMMI held an open access webinar to review new codes and payment rates in different settings. In a news release, the society noted that it would collect additional information as necessary to help inform CMS of the cost of making cardiac PET accessible to patients. CMS will continue to review these inputs, and the nuclear medicine community is encouraged to submit additional information on the most accurate resourcebased payment for these services by the February 10 deadline for consideration in future rule making.

SNMMI

Each month the editor of Newsline selects articles on diagnostic, therapeutic, research, and practice issues from a range of international publications. Most selections come from outside the standard canon of nuclear medicine and radiology journals. These briefs are offered as a monthly window on the broad arena of medical and scientific endeavor in which nuclear medicine now plays an essential role. The lines between diagnosis and therapy are sometimes blurred, as radiolabels are increasingly used as adjuncts to therapy and/or as active agents in therapeutic regimens, and these shifting lines are reflected in the briefs presented here.

Radiomic Features of PET/CT in NSCLC

noteworthy reviews of the literature.

We have also added a small section on

Krarup et al. from the Rigshospitalet/ Copenhagen University Hospital (Denmark) and King's College London/ St. Thomas' Hospital (UK) reported on November 13 ahead of print in Radiotherapy and Oncology on a study assessing potentially prognostic radiomic features on ¹⁸F-FDG PET/CT in patients with non-small cell lung cancer undergoing definitive chemoradiotherapy. The retrospective study included data from 233 such patients (145 men, 88 women; mean tumor volume, 129.873 cm³) who had undergone PET/CT for radiation therapy planning. Preselected prognostic and reproducible PET texture and shape features were calculated. Correlations between radiomic features and metabolic active tumor volumes (MTVs), gross tumor volumes (GTVs), $SUV_{max}\!,$ and SUV_{mean} were derived to yield data on the predictive value of radiomic features. Texture and shape features were found to be more strongly correlated to MTV and GTV than to SUV_{max} or SUV_{mean}. Four radiomic features predicted progression-free survival in univariate but not in multivariate analyses. The selected radiomic features also did not predict progression-free survival when

combined with any of the other variables. The authors concluded that "These results might be due to variations in technical parameters. However, it is relevant to question whether radiomic features are stable enough to provide clinically useful information."

Radiotherapy and Oncology

Automated Quantitative Tools in AD Assessment

In an article in the November issue of Medicine (Baltimore) (2019;98[45]: e17824), Ferrari et al. from the Hospital Israelita Albert Einstein and the Universidade de São Paulo (both in São Paulo, Brazil) investigated the sensitivity and specificity of hippocampal volume and glucose metabolism in patients being evaluated for Alzheimer disease (AD), using automated quantitative tools. The study included 38 patients \geq 45 y old with suspected AD, who had undergone ¹⁸F-FDG PET/CT and MR imaging as part of clinical assessment. PET/CT images were analyzed qualitatively and with Scenium software. MR images were analyzed with NeuroQuant software. Final diagnoses after a mean follow-up period of 23 \pm 11 mo were AD or high-risk mild cognitive impairment (MCI) for 16 patients (8 men, 8 women; average age, 69.38 ± 10.98 y). For the other 22 patients (14 women, 8 men; 67.50 \pm 11.60 y), a diagnosis of AD was initially excluded but patients may have had low-risk MCI. Qualitative PET/CT analyses showed greater accuracy, sensitivity, and negative predictive value than quantitative PET analysis, hippocampal MR volumetry, or specificity. The positive predictive value of PET/CT was similar to that of MR imaging. The authors concluded that the fact that ¹⁸F-FDG PET/CT qualitative analysis was significantly more effective than MR volumetry may, in part, "corroborate the sequential hypothesis of AD pathophysiology, which posits that functional changes (synaptic dysfunction) precede structural changes (atrophy)."

¹⁸F-DOPA PET + MR in MTC Liver Staging

Puhr-Westerheide et al. from University Hospital/Ludwig Maximilians Universität München (Germany) reported in the November 14 issue of Cancer Imaging (2019;19:73) on the potential value of adding gadoxetic acid-enhanced MR imaging to ¹⁸F-DOPA PET/CT for liver staging in medullary thyroid carcinoma (MTC). The retrospective study included 36 patients (14 women, 22 men; median age, 55 y) with histologically proven MTC who had undergone gadoxetic acid-enhanced liver MR and matching contrast-enhanced ¹⁸F-DOPA PET/CT imaging within a 1-mo period. The imaging datasets were categorized on visual assessment for likelihood of metastases and differences in detection and characterization of lesions. Followup PET/CT and MR imaging were used as a reference standard. In all, 207 liver lesions (152 metastases, 37 benign cysts, 18 hemangiomas) were detected and analyzed (149 on ¹⁸F-DOPA PET/CT, 207 on MR imaging). Of the 58 additional lesions detected by MR imaging, 54 were metastases (median diameter, 0.5 cm) not detected on ¹⁸F-DOPA PET/CT. MR imaging allowed for definite lesion classification in 92% (190/207), compared with only 76% (113/149) for ¹⁸F-DOPA-PET/CT. MR results also led to a change in category in 14% of lesions detected by PET/CT (21/149). The authors concluded that "gadoxetic acid-enhanced MRI allows for a more precise liver staging in MTC patients than ¹⁸F-DOPA PET/CT alone, particularly for ¹⁸F-DOPA-negative metastases and lesions <1 cm."

Cancer Imaging

PET/CT and Relapse Risk in GCA

In an article e-published ahead of print on November 12 in *Clinical Rheumatology*, Bellan et al. from the Università del Piemonte Orientale, Maggiore della Carità Hospital, and the Interdisciplinary Research Center of Autoimmune

Medicine (Baltimore)

Diseases (all in Novara, Italy) reported on the potential prognostic value of PET in stratification of relapse risk in patients with large-vessel giant cell arteritis (LV-GCA). The retrospective study included a review of 19 such patients (10 women, 9 men; median age, 74.0 y; 12 with typical cranial GCA and 7 with LV-GCA) who had undergone PET/CT imaging at diagnosis. Fifteen of the 19 patients were originally diagnosed with aortitis, including 8 with classical cranial GCA and 7 with LV-GCA. Over a follow-up of 15 mo (range, 4.5-26.5 mo), 4 relapses occurred. The only statistical difference between those who relapsed and those who did not was sex: all relapsers were male. In both sexes, aortitis was not more frequent among relapsers. The authors concluded that their study confirmed "PET as a valid tool in the identification of LV-GCA with no cranial involvement." They failed, however, to validate a role for PET in prognostic stratification of GCA, although male sex was a potential risk factor for GCA relapse.

Clinical Rheumatology

PET/CT After Hepatic Radioembolization from Breast Cancer

Deipolyi et al. from the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (New York, NY) reported on November 15 ahead of print in Cardiovascular and Interventional Radiology on a study looking at PET/CT imaging characteristics in patients with metastatic breast cancer during follow-up after ⁹⁰Y radioembolization of hepatic metastases. The study included 30 patients who underwent 38 90Y-glass or -resin radioembolizations. PET/CT was performed (on average) 51 d before radioembolization, and 68 PET/CTs were acquired after treatment (6 at 0-30 d, 15 at 31-60 d, 9 at 61-90 d, 13 at 91-120 days, 14 at 121-180 d, and 11 at >180 d). Modified PERCIST were used in assessing response in the hepatic territory. An objective response was defined as a decrease in SUV_{peak} by $\geq 30\%$. Twenty-five patients (83%) achieved objective response on at least

1 follow-up. Median survival was 15 mo after the first radioembolization. The highest responses were seen in those imaged at 30–90 d, with more than 75% of patients showing objective response at that time. After 180 d, objective response was seen in only 25% of patients, with a median time to progression of 169 d among responders. The authors concluded that "these results help to guide the timing of imaging and also to inform patients of expected outcomes after radioembolization."

Cardiovascular and Interventional Radiology

Amyloid PET AUC in a Memory Clinic

In an article e-published on October 6 ahead of print in Alzheimer's and Dementia, de Wilde et al. from the VU University (Amsterdam, The Netherlands), Lund University (Malmö, Sweden), University College London (UK), and University Medical Center Utrecht (The Netherlands) assessed the usefulness of appropriate use criteria (AUC) for amyloid PET imaging in an unselected memory clinic cohort. The study included 507 patients in whom the authors calculated the sensitivity and specificity of appropriate use (based on increased diagnostic confidence and management change), as defined by the Amyloid Imaging Taskforce and other clinical outcomes. The researchers also compared differences in post-PET diagnosis and management change between patients who were considered "AUC-consistent" (n = 250) and "AUC-inconsistent" (n = 257) after PET diagnosis. In both groups post-PET diagnosis and management changes were significant. The Amyloid Imaging Taskforce's definition of appropriate use occurred in only 55 (13%) patients, detected by the AUC with a sensitivity of 93% and a specificity of 56%. Diagnostic changes were found to occur independently of AUC status. The authors concluded that "the current AUC are not sufficiently able to discriminate between patients who will benefit from amyloid PET and those who will not."

Alzheimer's and Dementia

PET/CT and Metabolic Activity in RA Therapies

Dam et al. from the Gunma University Graduate School of Medicine (Maebashi, Japan), the Bach Mai Hospital (Hanoi, Vietnam), and the Hanoi Medical University (Vietnam) reported on October 3 ahead of print in the Scandinavian Journal of Rheumatology on a study using ¹⁸F-FDG PET/CT to evaluate the metabolic activity of axillary lymph nodes and effectiveness in clinical assessment of disease activity in rheumatoid arthritis patients treated with biologic therapies. The study included 64 patients with rheumatoid arthritis who underwent ¹⁸F-FDG PET/CT imaging at baseline and after 6 mo of biologic therapy. SUV_{max}, metabolic active volume, and total lesion glycolysis data were used to assess glucose metabolism in the lymph nodes and 12 upperlimb joints. Clinical data included serum markers and a disease activity score based on 28-joint-count erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR). Results showed that changes in SUV_{max} and total lesion glycolysis for the axillary lymph nodes correlated significantly with those in the ipsilateral wrist joints, as well as a positive correlation between changes in the 3 metabolic parameters of the axillary lymph nodes and changes in disease activity after treatment. After 6 mo of biologic therapy, all metabolic parameters for the axillary lymph nodes in patients with 28-jointcount ESR <3.2 were significantly lower than in those with corresponding rates \geq 3.2. The authors concluded that "the metabolic activity and active volume of axillary lymph nodes may reflect the therapeutic response to the biologic treatment of rheumatoid arthritis."

> Scandinavian Journal of Rheumatology

¹⁸F-FDG PET/CT in LN Staging in Urothelial Carcinoma

In an article e-published on October 4 in *European Urology Oncology*, Voskuilen et al. from the Netherlands Cancer Institute–Antoni van Leeuwenhoek Hospital (Amsterdam, The Netherlands), Aarhus University Hospital (Denmark), UZ Leuven (Belgium), Fondazione IRCCS Istituto Nazionale dei Tumori (Milan, Italy), the Moffitt Cancer Center (Tampa, FL), the IRCCS Ospedale San Raffaele/Vita-Salute San Raffaele University (Milan, Italy), the Medical University of Vienna (Austria), I.M. Sechenov First Moscow State Medical University (Russia), Bichat-Claude Bernard Hospital (Paris, France), Zealand University Hospital (Roskilde, Denmark), and Seoul National University Hospital (South Korea) reported on the diagnostic value of ¹⁸F-FDG PET/CT for lymph node staging in patients with upper-tract urothelial carcinoma. The retrospective study included data from 117 such patients who underwent PET/CT before surgery in 8 centers (patients who received neoadjuvant chemotherapy were excluded). Imaging results were compared with those from histopathology in 62 patients after lymph node dissection. Analyses looked at differences in survival in groups with and without suspicious lymph nodes on presurgical PET/CT. At histopathology, lymph node metastases were identified in 17 patients. The sensitivity and specificity of ¹⁸F-FDG PET/CT for diagnosis of lymph nodes metastases were 82% and 84%, respectively. Recurrence-free survival was significantly worse in patients with lymph nodepositive PET/CT than in those with lymph node-negative imaging findings.

Cancer-specific and overall survival rates were similar in the 2 groups.

European Urology Oncology

Reviews

Review articles provide an important way to stay up to date on the latest topics and approaches through valuable summaries of pertinent literature. The Newsline editor recommends several general reviews accessioned into the PubMed database in October and early November. Luiting et al. from the Erasmus University Medical Center (Rotterdam, The Netherlands), The Netherlands Cancer Institute (Amsterdam), Amsterdam University Medical Centers (The Netherlands), the University of New South Wales (Sydney, Australia), St. Vincent's Prostate Cancer Centre (Darlinghurst, Australia), and Garvan Institute of Medical Research/ Kinghorn Cancer Centre (Darlinghurst, Australia) published the "Use of 68Ga-PSMA PET for detecting lymph node metastases in primary and recurrent prostate cancer and location of recurrence after radical prostatectomy: An overview of the current literature" ahead of print in the November 4 issue of BJU International. In an article released on November 5 ahead of print in the International Journal of Molecular Sciences, Frankl et al. from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center (Dallas)

reported on "Imaging metabolically active fat: A literature review and mechanistic insights." In an article e-published on October 11 in Current Urology Reports, Pozzessere et al. from the AUSL Toscana Centro San Giuseppe Hospital (Empoli, Italy), Lausanne University Hospital/ University of Lausanne (Switzerland), San Camillo De Lellis Hospital (Rieti, Italy), and the Medical University of Vienna (Austria) presented "Renal cell carcinoma: The oncologist asks, can PSMA PET/CT answer?" Bélissant Benesty et al. from the Hôpital Tenon APHP/Sorbonne University (Paris), the Hôpital Cochin APHP/Paris Descartes University (Paris), the Hôpital Bicêtre APHP/Université Paris Sud (Bicêtre). and the Centre Hospitalo-Universitaire de Caen/Université de Caen Normandie (all in France) summarized the state of the art in "68Ga-DOTATOC PET/CT in detecting neuroendocrine tumours responsible for initial or recurrent paraneoplastic Cushing's syndrome" on October 3 ahead of print in Endocrine. Ahead of print on October 2 in the International Journal of Molecular Sciences, Van de Wiele et al. from AZ Groeninge (Kortrijk, Belgium), University Ghent (Belgium), the University of Pretoria (South Africa), and the University of Leuven (Belgium) published "PSMA-targeting positron emission agents for imaging solid tumors other than nonprostate carcinoma: A systematic review."