SNMMI Virtual Meeting a Real-Life Success

Virginia Pappas, CAE, SNMMI CEO

Earlier this year, SNMMI was faced with the difficult decision of how to move forward with its 2020 Annual Meeting during the COVID-19 pandemic. Knowing that an in-person meeting would be impossible, SNMMI took the opportunity to reimagine the Annual Meeting and create a truly innovative virtual experience for the nuclear medicine and molecular imaging community. Utilizing an interactive, virtual platform, the society presented a robust and groundbreaking Annual Meeting that was a resounding success.

Held July 11–14, the 2020 virtual meeting drew 9,000 registrants from all over the world. All SNMMI members received free registration for the virtual Annual Meeting; nonmembers who joined the society were offered the same benefit. In addition, the International Atomic Energy Agency, a sponsor of the virtual meeting, offered complimentary registration to its member states, with more than 1,000 associated individuals attending the meeting.

The virtual Annual Meeting offered a wide variety of continuing education sessions, on-demand access to hundreds of scientific abstract oral presentations and posters, a cutting-edge exhibit hall, and networking events—all in a flexible format designed to accommodate the needs of attendees' schedules. The easy-to-use and vibrant virtual platform mimicked the dynamics of a physical meeting, making it easy for attendees to navigate and take full advantage of all features of the meeting.

Entering the virtual "Live Sessions" auditorium, attendees accessed an exceptional education program spanning everything from boot camps to hot topics in nuclear medicine and molecular imaging, such as nuclear medicine in the time of COVID-19, current perspectives on total-body PET, and new isotope development. Six young investigator sessions, 2 basic science summary sessions, and 14 continuing education sessions were offered over the course of the meeting, allowing participants to earn up to 25 continuing education credits. These interactive sessions included live chat functionality for questions and answers, which was used extensively by attendees.

Plenary sessions featuring keynote speakers, significant awards, and accomplishments were also offered in the Live Session lecture hall. Jagat Narula, MD, PhD, MACC, the Henry N. Wagner, Jr., MD, lecturer, delivered an outstanding presentation on molecular imaging in cardiovascular medicine. Peter S. Conti, MD, PhD, presented the Cassen Lecture on "Molecular imaging in 2020 and beyond: Expect the unexpected," discussing insights into the potential

role of molecular imaging of viral infection as well as developments in the cancer imaging field. The SNMMI-TS plenary session, presented by Lisa Bodei, MD, PhD, focused on radionuclide therapy during COVID-19, and the always interesting Highlights Symposium was presented at the conclusion of the meeting by Heather Jacene, MD, Julie Price, PhD, Andrew Scott, MD, and Mehran Sadeghi, MD.

The virtual Science Pavilion allowed participants to discover and explore scientific abstracts on the latest research in nuclear medicine and molecular imaging. The pavilion featured more than 275 research presentations, including recorded oral presentations from the authors, as well as posters and educational exhibits. Attendees were able to get further information while visiting posters by either chatting or e-mailing questions to authors.

Moving to the virtual Exhibit Hall, attendees had the opportunity to visit the customized virtual booths of more than 80 top industry suppliers and organizations in the nuclear medicine and molecular imaging field. Each exhibit offered the chance to learn more about products and services through videos and downloadable presentations. Attendees participated in one-on-one meetings with exhibit personnel via online chats while visiting the booths.

In the Networking Lounge, Annual Meeting attendees had online interactions that allowed them to connect with professionals from around the world both in one-on-one conversations and in group settings. Virtual networking events, including the Molecular Hub Meet-Ups, Presidents' Town Hall and Reception, Drink and Think sessions, and the Knowledge Bowl, brought attendees together over the course of the meeting. Participants also enjoyed the premiere of the Amazon film *Radioactive*, released early only for SNMMI attendees, at a viewing party organized by the Women in Nuclear Medicine Committee.

I'm pleased to note that all content from the Annual Meeting will remain available online to registrants for 1 year, and

additional content will be rolled out in webinars over the next few months. This includes an exciting Technologist Summer Program, as well as content from SNMMI's councils and centers.

The 2020 Annual Meeting provided a wealth of current and valuable information and offered attendees a meaningful, interactive virtual experience. With the tremendous success of this virtual meeting and the accessibility of the content, SNMMI will be considering holding meetings virtually in future months to offer its members and the nuclear medicine community the best possible education while ensuring their safety.

NEWSBRIEFS

FDA Approves Tau Pathology Imaging Drug

On May 28 the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved Tauvid (flortaucipir F18) for intravenous injection, for PET imaging in adult patients with cognitive impairment for evaluation for Alzheimer disease (AD). The FDA granted approval of Tauvid to Avid Radiopharmaceuticals, Inc. (Philadelphia, PA), a subsidiary of Eli Lilly and Company. The approval came through the Priority Review process, under which the FDA goal is to take action on an application within 6 months if the agency determines that the drug, if approved, would significantly improve the safety or effectiveness of treating, diagnosing, or preventing a serious condition.

"AD is a devastating condition that affects millions of Americans. This approval will provide health care professionals with a new type of brain scan to use in patients being evaluated for AD," said Charles Ganley, MD, director of the Office of Specialty Medicine in the FDA Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. "While there are FDA approved imaging drugs for amyloid pathology, this is the first drug approved for imaging tau pathology, one of the 2 neuropathological hallmarks of AD, and represents a major advance for patients with cognitive impairment being evaluated for the condition."

The safety and effectiveness of Tauvid imaging were evaluated in 2 clinical studies. The first enrolled 156 patients who were terminally ill and agreed to undergo Tauvid PET imaging and participate in a post-mortem brain donation program. In 64 of the patients who died within 9 months of PET imaging, evaluators' interpretations were compared with post-mortem findings from independent pathologists who evaluated the density and distribution of neurofibrillary tangles (NFTs). Results showed that the scans had a high probability of correctly evaluating patients with tau pathology and an average-to-high probability of correctly evaluating patients without tau pathology.

The second study included the same patients, with 18 additional participants with terminal illness and 159 patients with cognitive impairment being evaluated for AD, and focused on interobserver agreement in scan interpretation. Agreement was at 87% across all 241 patients in the study and 90% in a separate subgroup analysis that included the 82 terminally ill patients diagnosed after death and the 159 patients with cognitive impairment.

The most common adverse reactions in patients using Tauvid were headache, injection site pain, and increased blood pressure. Tauvid is not indicated for use in the evaluation of patients for chronic traumatic encephalopathy.

The availability of Tauvid will initially be limited and will expand in response to commercial demand and payor reimbursement. "The fight against AD requires precise and reliable assessments of the 2 key pathologies of the disease, because clinical assessments alone are limited in their ability to accurately diagnose patients," said Mark Mintun, MD, vice president of Lilly's pain and neurodegeneration research and development. "I am excited that Tauvid has now been approved to image tau NFTs, which is the other key pathology, allowing a more comprehensive evaluation of patients. Lilly and Avid Radiopharmaceuticals are committed to bringing innovative AD diagnostics to the patients who need them most."

U.S. Food and Drug Administration
Eli Lilly and Company

Regulatory Relief for Imaging/ Localization Study Training

On June 11, SNMMI, along with the American Society of Nuclear Cardiology, the American Society for Radiation Oncology, and the American College of Radiology requested regulatory relief from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) for training for imaging and localization studies during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE). The current regulation reads: "Work experience must involve: Eluting generator systems appropriate for preparation of radioactive drugs for imaging and localization studies, measuring and testing the eluate for radionuclidic purity, and processing the eluate with reagent kits to prepare labeled radioactive drugs" (10 *CFR* Part 35.290 (c)(1)(ii)(G)).

The joint letter requested that NRC allow this requirement to be met using virtual technology (video/webinar) and add this as an already vetted area for regulatory relief when requested by licensees. This request is similar to the previous NRC Advisory Committee on the Medical Uses of Isotopes subcommittee recommendation for a 1-time modification because of the pandemic. That request stated, "In situations when hands-on training (hot lab) is not feasible, then video/webinar