

Opportunities for Growth in Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging

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The discipline of nuclear medicine is stronger than ever, and its future is brighter than ever. Radiopharmaceutical therapies—such as ^{177}Lu -PSMA-617, approved a few months ago, and ^{177}Lu -DOTATATE, approved a few years ago—are propelling theranostics to the forefront of the field. Techniques such as dynamic imaging of an extended field of view now provide an extraordinary photon sensitivity with very low levels of radioactivity. Artificial intelligence and machine learning are reshaping the research and development of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging.

While these advances are driving the science of the field forward, we must also ensure that patients benefit from them. As I begin my term as SNMMI president, I plan to address several issues that will help the field grow while focusing on optimal patient care and quality and the safety of our diagnostic and therapeutic procedures as top priorities. By concentrating on public awareness, patient engagement, and regulatory approvals, we can make great strides to benefit our patients.

Nuclear medicine is not a common household phrase. To educate the public about what nuclear medicine is and what it can accomplish, SNMMI launched an awareness campaign last year. Targeting consumer broadcast media (print and digital news publications, radio, TV), SNMMI has reached a very broad audience, including patients, caregivers, referring physicians, legislators, regulators, and payers. In its first 6 months the campaign reached more than 1 billion consumers. We will continue this important consumer outreach in the coming year. By exposing the public to multiple “stories” about nuclear medicine over an extended period of time, we can enhance their recall and strengthen their understanding.

We must also continue our efforts to ensure that patients and the medical community recognize the value of nuclear medicine, molecular imaging, and radionuclide therapy. SNMMI’s 14-member Patient Advocacy Advisory Board will remain a driving force in advising the society on development of patient education materials and public policy regarding nuclear medicine and molecular imaging. The society will also continue its education of referring physicians during session presentations and symposia at several events, including the Pediatric Endocrine Society, American Society for Radiation Oncology, Large Urology Group Practice Association, American Urological Association, and San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium.

Access to nuclear medicine and molecular imaging is another key issue for SNMMI. The society will work closely with U.S. regulators to streamline the approval of promising new diagnostic and therapeutic radiopharmaceuticals. Reimbursement of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging procedures also remains a critical issue. SNMMI cosponsors the Facilitating Innovative Nuclear Diagnostics (FIND) Act, which, if passed, would direct the Department of Health and Human Services to pay separately for all outpatient diagnostic radiopharmaceuticals rather than packaging them with other medical supplies. In promoting the FIND Act, SNMMI hopes to help patients achieve greater access to a wide range of diagnostic radiopharmaceuticals.

Radiopharmaceutical access also depends on manufacturers, as we saw in the recent halt in production of Lutathera and Pluvicto. SNMMI members and the patients we serve need a reliable supply chain for innovative radiopharmaceutical therapies to be used regularly and widely. SNMMI is dedicated to contributing to the radiopharmaceutical therapy space to help our field continue to grow.

I feel strongly that SNMMI is the leading global nuclear medicine organization and plan to increase the recognition of the society and its initiatives during my term as president. Our Mid-Winter and Annual Meetings are premier nuclear medicine and molecular imaging events and are attended by thousands of professionals from around the world. *The Journal of Nuclear Medicine* publishes cutting-edge research and enjoys its highest impact factor ever, ranking third among all medical imaging journals worldwide. We lead the way in developing clinical guidelines and promoting quality among the profession. As SNMMI continues its impactful work, we will make sure that the organization and its members are recognized for their contributions to the field.

SNMMI is a unique organization that brings together diverse nuclear medicine and molecular imaging professionals—physicians, scientists, pharmacists, technologists, and lab professionals. It is my pleasure to work on behalf of each of the SNMMI members to improve our field. I look forward to collaborating with the society’s dedicated leadership, volunteers, and staff over the next year in our mission to improve patient care.



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