

A Unified Voice for Our Field: SNMITS Membership Makes a Difference

We, as nuclear medicine technologists, find ourselves at a crossroads, and the timing for us to take a stand is critical. The field of nuclear medicine needs a strong and unified voice to advocate for the knowledge base and clinical skills needed for quality studies. This applies to the physicians who interpret the nuclear medicine studies and the technologists who perform them. As technologists, we can combine our efforts and advocate for our field through our professional organization. SNMITS allows technologists to have a unified voice; it allows for advancement in the field and ensures that we are recognized as valuable members of the health care team. During my presidency, I will focus on 3 major areas in which we as technologists can work together: membership, education, and advocacy.

First, a major initiative for SNMITS has always been increasing and retaining the number of technologists in its membership. Despite the current economic situation, which has been exacerbated by cuts in health care reimbursement and the lack of radionuclide supply—leading to job shortages for nuclear medicine technologists—SNMITS members continue to see the importance of belonging to a specialty society. Just as technologists depend on SNMITS to advocate for the profession and ensure that they have the tools needed to prepare for the future, SNMITS depends on its membership to continue to support the initiatives set forth in the strategic plan. As of July 7, 2010, SNMITS has 10,786 members (including student memberships). We have several committees responsible for promoting membership in SNMITS, retaining members, and seeking ways to expand the services



and benefits available to members of the nuclear medicine community. Recruiting passionate and dedicated young individuals and getting them interested in the profession will help SNMITS remain strong, as these young professionals will be our voice in the future. This year, we experienced an increase of 155 student free-trial members. Welcome packets communicating the benefits of SNMITS membership are available online and are being sent to all new members. By continuously attracting and keeping technologists in the membership, we achieve our goal of creating a stronger bond among members and elevating SNMITS' profile as the leading organization in the field.

Second, we have to ensure that our technologists have the tools necessary to maneuver in the changing world of health care. SNMITS is offering non-traditional educational programs for the current technologist workforce in nuclear cardiology, PET, and CT and will be developing programs for MRI. Another educational goal of SNMITS is to support the transition of certificate and associate programs in offering a baccalaureate degree. Currently,

SNMITS is assisting 3 pilot programs that will serve as models for other nuclear medicine technologist programs as they transition. The SNMITS educators' committee transition task force is assisting this transitioning by designing the curriculum to meet *SNMITS Curriculum Guide, 4th Edition*, culminating in a bachelor's degree. The *SNMITS Curriculum Guide* includes general studies prerequisite course work in algebra, anatomy and physiology, physics, and chemistry. Additional professional course work includes cross-sectional anatomy with an emphasis on hybrid and molecular imaging. The curriculum was approved by the SNMITS executive board and SNM board of directors in June 2008. Implementing the SNMITS curriculum will assist programs in meeting the following credentialing and accreditation standards: the revised accreditation standards of the JRCNMT, which become effective January 1, 2011; the ARRT's requirement that all entry-level technologists have an associate's degree as the minimum standard; and the NMTCB's requirement that only graduates from programmatically accredited programs can take the certifying examination by 2016.

Third, it is important for SNMITS to have a unified voice on the advocacy front. The issues that are currently of great concern are the CARE bill, state regulatory issues, the Markey bill, and USP<797>. SNMITS continues to advocate for passage of the Consistency, Accuracy, Responsibility, and Excellence in Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy Act (H.R. 3652). As it stands, only 26 states have established standards for nuclear medicine technologists. We will continue to lobby until our message gets through

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that the lack of minimum educational standards allows inadequately trained personnel to perform medical imaging and therapeutic procedures in the United States every day. Poor-quality images can lead to misdiagnosis, additional testing, delays in treatment, and anxiety in patients, costing the U.S. health care system millions of dollars each year. The CARE bill has been introduced in the Senate by Senators Mike Enzi (WY) and Tom Harkin (IA). It was introduced in the House of Representatives by Rep. John Barrow (GA). It currently has 105 cosponsors in the house. Even if the CARE bill passes, with the practice of hybrid imaging, state regulatory issues will also have to be addressed. To achieve this goal, SNM's state health policy liaisons will need to take on new responsibilities and work with the Council of Radiation Control Program Directors to determine the regulatory issues of each state. The goal is to ensure that states have minimal educational standards to perform nuclear medicine procedures with and without hybrid instrumentation. Our scope of practice is so very important in this process that a scope-of-practice task force was created. The goal is to monitor the scope-of-practice issues and to

gather the documentation needed to support the nuclear medicine technologist scope of practice.

Although Canada's Chalk River Reactor received approval to go back online, our problems with ^{99m}Tc supply are still creating serious delays that affect patient care and the number of nuclear medicine procedures performed. We continue to promote the domestic supply of ^{99m}Tc by raising awareness with the "Got ^{99m}Tc ?" campaign. This campaign was created to inform the medical community and the public about the importance of having this critical medical isotope available. We continue to urge Congress to pass the Markey bill—the American Medical Isotopes Production Act (H.R. 3276)—so that we can ensure a domestic supply of medical isotopes.

SNMITS is also taking the lead on addressing the impact USP<797> will have on the practice of nuclear medicine. We are communicating with the accrediting and regulatory agencies about interpretations on the regulations and with nuclear medicine technologists to assist them with questions about the USP<797> regulations to ensure compliance. SNM, in collaboration with the tech advocacy committee, committee on pharmacopeia, and commission on radiopharma-

ceuticals, just submitted comments on a proposed revision of USP<797> language regarding sterile preparations. SNM continues to receive questions about USP<797> compliance as facilities implement the requirements. All questions and answers are posted at the SNM Web site (<http://interactive.snm.org/index.cfm?PageID=7882>).

SNMITS has to remain strong to continue to be a voice for our profession. Though we have accomplished much, there is still much more to do. As health care reform continues, nuclear medicine technologists need a voice to inform the public, other health care providers, government officials, third-party payers, and regulatory and accrediting agencies about the field of nuclear medicine, including the educational standards and clinical skills required to perform nuclear medicine procedures.

Our members need to know that their SNMITS membership counts and does make a difference to the individual and the profession as a whole. SNMITS is the voice for nuclear medicine technologists.

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