Navigating Uncharted Waters

Preparing for our future is like managing the unknown. We must find answers to questions such as, What will the field look like in 5 or 10 years? Are we prepared? Do we have the right people in place to educate and train new leaders? As president of SNMMI-TS, it is my job to consider these questions and work with the SNMMI-TS committee chairs, the NCOR, and all SNMMI-TS members to answer these questions for the future.

Visualize the SNMMI-TS and its members as a huge ship and its leaders as the rudders. The leadership is tasked with steering the ship through various challenges and opportunities. The leaders must have the foresight and courage to steer ahead into uncharted waters to seek new opportunities and advances. Many years ago, to address the needs of nuclear medicine technologists, the Technologist Section of the Society was formed. Throughout the Section’s history, previous presidents faced many challenges that resulted in changes within the structure of the organization, education and training recommendations for the field, and the expansion into molecular imaging. The voice that the Technologist Section yields led to the adoption of the NMTCB and moved the field toward the acceptance state licensure. In more recent times, the force has driven the Section to endorse the baccalaureate degree for entry into the field. None of these changes were implemented without careful consideration, understanding, and thoughtfulness. My predecessors knew we had to forge ahead regardless of how the seas were rolling.

Over the past several years, the field and the organization have been through some rough waters. Reacting to rapid changes in the field coupled with a job shortage is a challenge on which the Technologist Section is working. The SNMMI-TS leadership has been working to develop a new path and new strategies to reach out to all of our members and help them during this time. The educators, as well as our most recent leaders, worked diligently in charting a course for education and training toward new modalities with hybrid imaging. The establishment of the nuclear medicine advanced associate program provides an advanced-level career path for nuclear medicine technologists. Although this opportunity is a good one, the SNMMI-TS will also be working to identify other advanced-level career paths to assist more technologists.

SNMMI-TS has worked over the past decade to encourage Congress to pass the Consistency, Accuracy, Responsibility, and Excellence in Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy Act (CARE Bill). The CARE Bill’s premise is foundationally sound and one that must be nurtured to its logical conclusion. However, we must consider if it may be time to work state by state to implement standards for nuclear medicine technologists.

The SNMMI-TS leadership has also set its sights on distant lands—forging international relationships, while continuing its work on domestic issues and outreach. We would be short-sighted to ignore the fact that the SNMMI/SNMMI-TS is an international organization and, as such, is a major player on the world stage of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging.

The SNMMI-TS is currently preparing to develop a strategic plan for 2013–2018. A task force has been created, and its members will be faced with preparing for our future while managing the unknown. New imaging agents and equipment are bursting on the scene now, and even more are projected over the next several years. We hope that you will explore with us some of the career pathways for which the nuclear medicine professional is uniquely prepared. When opportunity knocks at your door, will you have acquired the knowledge, certification, training, and skill set to take advantage of it? The SNMMI-TS leadership maintains its focus on what can be done to improve the current situation as a means of preparing for a healthy future.

Remember, it takes small movements of the rudder to turn the big ship; however, the ship will not turn quickly unless all the individuals are working together. You, as members and leaders, are an integral part of the Technologist Section. We thank you for your continued support and dedication and encourage you to provide your feedback at any time (feedback@snmmi.org).

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