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# History of the Education and Research Foundation (ERF)

Peggy Squires, CNMT, FSNMMI-TS

*ERF Board of Directors*

**A**s you read about the history of the SNMMI-TS and celebrate our existence for 50 y, it becomes apparent that organizations supporting growth, professional development, and continued education are also observing similar milestones. For over 5 decades, the Education and Research Foundation (ERF) has supported the SNMMI grants, awards, and scholarship program.

The ERF was incorporated in 1969 when the former leadership of the SNM decided to form a separately incorporated 501(c)3 organization to begin fundraising for the field. The board of directors initially consisted of members of the SNM board of directors.

Our start was modest; in 1973 the ERF raised \$10,317 and had assets of \$11,237. Four pilot research grants and 2 medical student fellowships were funded that year. ERF's transformation began with a \$1.25 million bequest in 1991 from the estate of Mary Wylie Cassen. The Cassen Prize is named in honor of the late physicist Benedict Cassen, whose invention, the rectilinear scanner, first brought the ability to image patients to nuclear medicine. This prize is awarded in recognition of outstanding achievement in nuclear medicine. The prize is given to a living scientist or physician-scientist whose work has led to a major advance in basic or clinical nuclear medicine. ERF bestows the honor—its most prestigious award—every other year.

The foundation enjoyed growth over the next few years, resulting in the hiring of a part-time administrative director of the ERF in 1994. The administrative director managed all functions except financial services. It turns out the new administrative director, Susan C. Weiss, CNMT, was an exceptional choice. She was a pioneer in the field of pediatric nuclear medicine, was the first female president of the Technologist Section, and is the first woman and technologist to be elected as a president of the ERF.

As of June 2001, assets had grown to \$3.145 million, and several major projects were funded. The foundation was honored with its second growth spurt in 2007 by a \$6.7 million bequest from the Anger estate. I find it noteworthy that Hal O. Anger was the first awardee of the Cassen Prize, recognized for his invention of the scintillation camera in 1994.

With the growth in our resources, the foundation immediately gifted \$300,000 to jump-start the SNM's bench-to-

bedside molecular imaging campaign, the first-ever fundraising campaign for the SNM.

In June 2012, the members of the SNM voted for a name change to the Society of Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging (SNMMI). The board of directors of the ERF, following that lead, subsequently approved a name change to the Education and Research Foundation for Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging, Inc.

With the exception of a handful of awards from other sources, the ERF is the primary source of the SNMMI grants program. Each year, the ERF provides close to \$300,000 to the SNMMI to provide grants, awards, and scholarships to its members. Gifts to this fund support the following technologist awards:

- TS travel awards
- Scholarships
- JNMT best papers
- Outstanding technologist and educator awards
- Abstract awards
- Bachelor's degree scholarships
- Advanced practitioner scholarships
- SNMMI-TS master's program
- JNM young-investigator best-paper travel awards

Every year, at least 55 technologists or technologist students are granted awards.

Since the creation of the Paul Cole Scholarship Fund in 1990, the ERF has provided 484 scholarships to technologists to complete their bachelor's degrees. But over the years, the fund has begun to dwindle. The ERF is currently in a campaign to raise \$100,000 to replenish the fund. When done, the ERF will be able to fully endow the fund and provide fifteen \$1,000 scholarships each year in perpetuity. This is the single most successful charitable program in the SNMMI-TS's history. It serves young people on the basis of financial need. As of February 24, 2020, \$99,583 has been raised in pledges and donations for this important campaign.

I would like to thank the current SNMMI-TS and ERF members and staff who have given so generously. Please consider supporting the Paul Cole Fund, a true bridge from our past to our collective future.

I am blessed to have known and had support from notable members of the SNMMI and the Technologist Section throughout my career. As a member of the ERF board of directors, I am proud to share in the efforts of the foundation, helping support opportunities for rising stars to make their own impact on the future of molecular medicine.