

Building the Medical Puzzle—One Atom at a Time

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It has been a wild ride. After living several years with a pandemic that changed our lives dramatically, we are finally coming out on the other side. We managed to get back together in Vancouver, Canada, with a face-to-face meeting option for the first time since January 2020. The meeting was a success, and it was so good to see so many people outside of a small box on a computer screen. SNMMI-TS made it out of the pandemic unharmed, and we are thriving! This is largely due to our fantastic members, volunteers, and staff, who work tirelessly to get things done. For that, I would like to say congratulations and thank you!

It is an incredible honor and enormous responsibility to take over as president of the SNMMI-TS. I am humbled by the support from our community, and I take the president's responsibilities very seriously. We live in a rapidly changing world that is often as complicated as a 5,000 piece jigsaw puzzle. If the pieces are all placed perfectly, we end up with a beautiful picture—but the process is long and tedious, and often large blanks of uncertainty are present. Nuclear medicine is a very important piece of the puzzle of diagnostic and therapeutic medicine. I am thankful that I have been entrusted with its care and guidance, ensuring that nuclear medicine stays in its rightful place in the puzzle.

The SNMMI-TS mission is to improve human health by advancing technology and professionals in nuclear medicine and molecular imaging. Our vision is to ensure that nuclear medicine and molecular imaging are an integral part of the standard of care for patient diagnosis, treatment, and therapy.

In order to achieve our mission and vision, we must ensure that nuclear medicine stays at the forefront of therapeutics. As you know, the realm of radiopharmaceutical therapy has exploded with activity over the past few years. Whenever an area of medicine becomes popular, there are entities ready to step in and take over. We are seeing this with radiopharmaceutical therapy. Other areas of medicine are more than happy to take nuclear medicine technologists and physicians out of the equation; however, the joke is on them. Radiopharmaceutical therapy is *ours*—it is in our DNA.

Nonetheless, there are challenges with keeping therapy under our umbrella. Radiopharmaceutical therapy is a big

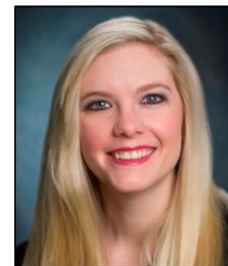
operation. It takes many skilled individuals to make therapies a success—especially when patient numbers are increasing dramatically. This brings us to one of the biggest issues facing nuclear medicine today: the shortage of nuclear medicine technologists and physicians.

To help overcome this major issue, the SNMMI has launched a Workforce Pipeline initiative. The SNMMI-TS has a major place in the initiative, and we have a task force dedicated solely to the issue of the decreasing numbers of nuclear medicine technologists. The task force's goal is to figure out the root causes of the shortage and what the SNMMI-TS can do to combat those causes. This is my number one focus this year, and I am eagerly waiting to see what the task force accomplishes!

There is also a push to bring forth a new Nuclear Medicine Advanced Associate (NMAA) Program. The NMAA is a physician extender working under the supervision of a physician who is also an authorized user of radioactive materials. The goal is to enhance patient care in both the diagnostic realm and the radiopharmaceutical therapy environment. We have not had an active program for several years. A program that generates highly skilled NMAAs would be game-changing.

As the world of radiopharmaceutical therapy rapidly expands, there will be a need for mid-level providers to help fill the gaps. The NMAA has all the skills of a general physician assistant or nurse practitioner plus vast knowledge of radiation and its uses in medicine. I am excited to see how the NMAA can be used in the ever-changing arena of nuclear medicine.

Overall, this giant jigsaw puzzle seems daunting, but I am certain that the SNMMI and the nuclear medicine community will come out on top. We will keep our rightful place in the puzzle, and what is created in the end will be a masterpiece. Just hang on and hang in there, the SNMMI-TS is working for you.



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