

## SNMMI-TS Is Working for YOU!

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Many exciting things are on the horizon for the world of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging. The SNMMI-TS has its finger on the pulse of the latest and greatest aspects of diagnostics and therapeutics. There are many initiatives and projects being worked on and developed by our talented committee members, and there are also new challenges that we are diligently working to overcome. I would like to take the time to discuss some of these.

### Barriers to Access and Workforce Pipeline Challenges

This is a main focus of the Biden Administration. In January of this year, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) secretary hosted a virtual roundtable to discuss challenges related to the health care workforce pipeline, which have been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nuclear medicine technologists (NMTs) are not alone in this issue. Employment in health care occupations is projected to grow 16 percent from 2020 to 2030—much faster than the average for all occupations—adding about 2.6 million new jobs.

In addition, almost 50 percent of technologists working in the field are 50+ years of age, so there may be a large number of retirements in the next 10–15 years. Also, fewer students entered the NMT programs in 2021, and this, coupled with a lower graduation rate due to COVID-19 in 2020, begs the question, “Who is going to fill our future workforce needs?” Moreover, we are seeing exponential growth in radiopharmaceutical therapies. There will need to be additional education and specialization needed for NMTs specific to therapies.

### What Is the SNMMI-TS Doing to Address These Challenges with the NMT Workforce Pipeline?

The SNMMI-TS has initiated the creation of a Workforce Pipeline Task Force to better understand the current challenges of entry into the field and understand the way students are exposed to nuclear medicine as a career pathway during high school and undergraduate education. In addition, through outreach, education, and the exchange of knowledge, the SNMMI-TS hopes to create communication bridges for NMT programs to work collaboratively with institutions around the country who need to hire qualified NMTs.

The purpose of this task force is:

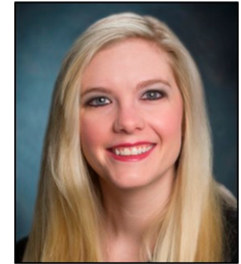
- To gather data regarding the current number of NMT positions available versus the number of practicing NMTs
- To identify challenges and opportunities for entry and retention within the field of nuclear medicine technology

- To create comprehensive pathway options for students into the field

The SNMMI wants to ensure that there is a sufficient number of professionals who are qualified to practice in all aspects of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging both now and in the future. In order to accomplish this goal, we have partnered with IMV to complete a comprehensive Nuclear Medicine Workforce Study. IMV is a recognized leader in market research and online publishing for the medical imaging and clinical diagnostic instruments markets. The company is looking specifically at factors affecting the future outlook for nuclear medicine departments.

The SNMMI also wants to increase awareness of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging as an appealing and rewarding field for students interested in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) careers. For the technologist pipeline, we are focused on 3 main areas:

- Chapter Collaboration—Creating a panel on workforce challenges
  - There will be discussion on how to solve challenges with a *regional* focus—we realize that different geographic areas have different challenges at times.
  - This will be a place to share best practices in order to disseminate the information to all regions.
- Career Pathways—Showcase different career options for technologists
  - “How did you get to where you are today, and what was needed to get there?”
  - SNMMI-TS has created a 4- to 5-minute video and social media uploads that are available this fall.
- Program Directors—Survey program directors (both current and ones from recently closed programs)
  - We want to determine why programs are closing.
  - We also want to identify possible institutions that can collaborate to train across the country.



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### Advancement through Advocacy

With nuclear medicine and molecular imaging rapidly expanding, it is *critical* that professionals within the field have a dedicated society working for them on behalf of their best interests. I am proud to say that the SNMMI truly is

working for YOU! By working together, we can bring greater value to the fields of imaging and medicine, advancing scientific discovery, and further improving patient outcomes.

The SNMMI monitors state-level issues impacting the field, with our Technologist Advocacy Group (TAG) members representing all 50 states. Our focus is seeking licensure and appropriate regulation for nuclear medicine technologists at the state level as well as appropriate reimbursement at the physician level. The SNMMI also advocates for members on national and local levels by monitoring news, laws/regulations, and policy changes that affect SNMMI's technologists.

Current advocacy efforts include 3 states:

- Pennsylvania: We are continuing to work on a bill that would make changes to the Medical Practices Act and require licensing of imaging professionals.
- Michigan: Administrative rules are being debated concerning which jurisdiction nuclear medicine falls into related to state legislation and agencies. SNMMI provided policymakers with a list of Nuclear Regulatory Commission state licensure statutes and regulations and continues to work to pass our bill.
- Georgia: We are currently working on a certification requirement to perform medical imaging or radiation therapy. We are collaborating and negotiating on language beneficial to nuclear medicine technologists.

#### **Molecular Therapy Task Force**

Because radiopharmaceutical therapy is rapidly growing, SNMMI-TS leadership recognized that we needed to put special focus and emphasis on this area. I am very excited to see what this group does this year. There are 4 major goals for this task force:

1. Create a comprehensive radiopharmaceutical therapy educational program for technologists.
2. Develop radiopharmaceutical therapy clinical tools and resources for technologists.
3. Serve as the leader in identifying and managing professional practice issues for technologists within radiopharmaceutical therapy.
4. Create a comprehensive outreach strategy to disseminate education and resources to technologists.

#### **Technologist Quality Committee**

This committee has been going strong for several years now. The SNMMI-TS is committed to quality, and I wanted to take the time to highlight what this group is currently working on. The 4 main charges for this committee this year are:

1. Develop a quality survey to identify metrics (KPIs) used routinely in nuclear medicine to assess quality.
2. Create education for gap areas (these were identified in the 2022 Quality Survey) and develop working documents for reference and publication.
3. Develop educational materials and presentations/webinars related to improving quality in nuclear medicine and molecular imaging.
4. Meet with stakeholders to ensure buy-in collaboration to move initiatives forward.

The committee is currently developing a white paper with an analytical comparison of the 2015 and 2022 quality surveys. The group is also developing educational resources regarding dose calibrator calibration, quality control, and appropriate usage. Be on the lookout for these in the near future!

#### **Nuclear Medicine ARRT Clinical Refreshers**

The SNMMI partnered with the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists (ARRT) to develop nuclear medicine-specific Continuing Qualification Requirements (CQRs). This project began in 2018 and was completed in late 2021. Under the guidance of the SNMMI-TS CE Committee, the Clinical Refreshers were born. These refreshers are designed to meet the new CQRs of the ARRT and were developed by 32 subject matter experts, 7 SNMMI staff and consultants, and 3 ARRT reviewers. The Clinical Refreshers provide quick (15 minutes or less) basic information, in video format, on how to do nuclear medicine procedures. The videos follow the clinical competency outline and provide information on 44 specific topic areas. The clinical refreshers are available on the ARRT website.

#### **Wellness Initiative**

Finally, I want to leave you with a discussion on one of the newest initiatives of the SNMMI. The purpose of the Wellness Initiative is to help members identify and reflect on internal and external factors impacting personal well-being in a supportive environment of professional peers. We want to provide an avenue to combat burnout impacting the emotional, mental, and physical well-being of health care professionals around the world. The focus areas are burnout, emotional and mental exhaustion, guilt and anxiety, depression, and loneliness. This initiative is sponsored by the SNMMI In-Training Committee and Early Career Professionals Committee.

Remember, the SNMMI-TS is working for YOU ... but also know that your membership matters and YOU matter. I look forward to the rest of this year and to helping to facilitate the exciting things that are coming!