Sharing Our Knowledge through Education

Educating nuclear medicine and molecular imaging professionals and referring physicians—both in North America and internationally—is a top strategic goal for SNMMI. Working with our leadership and member volunteers, SNMMI has created a wide array of new educational opportunities covering many topics, including the priorities identified as part of the society’s banner initiatives—new tracers, modalities, and therapies, as well as quality.

With the approval of florbetapir in 2012, brain amyloid imaging quickly became a topic of interest for nuclear medicine and molecular imaging professionals and neurologists. SNMMI has taken an active role in educating these groups on various aspects of clinical use of the radiopharmaceutical, including appropriate use, community education, and adherence to Food and Drug Administration requirements. SNMMI has begun grassroots-level outreach at society chapter meetings about the recently published appropriate use criteria for brain amyloid imaging—a joint effort between SNMMI and the Alzheimer’s Association. Upcoming sessions will focus on training nuclear medicine and molecular imaging physicians and technologists to speak to referring physicians and patients about using the new scans. Local referring physicians—neurologists, geriatricians, psychiatrists, and family physicians—will be invited to the meetings to learn about amyloid imaging. Supporting literature, as well as other newly published articles, will also be presented at the chapter meetings.

Collaboration with other medical societies is a key component of SNMMI’s brain amyloid imaging education. SNMMI has cosponsored education sessions on the topic at meetings of the American Association of Geriatric Psychiatry and the American Association of Neuology (AAN). Discussions are underway to plan future joint education with the AAN, and SNMMI will engage the American Psychiatric Association and American Academy of Family Physicians to hold similar sessions at their meetings. SNMMI also has plans to create an online education program for nuclear medicine and molecular imaging physicians and referring physicians. It will feature detailed case studies, 2 Lifelong Learning and Self-Assessment Program modules, a new amyloid imaging guideline (currently under development), a bibliography supporting the value of amyloid imaging, a list of upcoming amyloid-related events, webinars, fact sheets, and other didactic materials.

Advances in modalities are another area of education focus for SNMMI. The PET Center of Excellence, in conjunction with the Center for Molecular Imaging Innovation and Translation (CMIIT), hosted a PET/MR symposium, “A Different Spin on Nuclear Imaging: The Role of PET/MRI in Molecular Imaging,” during the 2013 Mid-Winter Meeting in New Orleans, LA. In addition, the Correlative Imaging Council (CIC) hosted a 30-case MR Workshop and Review during the meeting. This workshop was part of the CIC’s 5-year MR education program plan that would incorporate didactic and case-based MR imaging education.

At the SNMMI 2013 Annual Meeting in Vancouver, Canada, the PET Center of Excellence, CMIIT, and the CIC will sponsor sessions on PET/MR. SNMMI is also creating online education modules, self-assessment modules, and continuing education articles for The Journal of Nuclear Medicine.

Optical imaging is another topic of interest for many in the molecular imaging field. SNMMI is currently working with The Optical Society (OSA) to explore partnerships to combine members’ expertise in optical imaging. An OSA/SNMMI joint symposium—“Photons Across Medicine”—was offered at the Optics in Life Sciences Congress in April. In addition, continuing education courses—“Translational Optical Imaging Modalities, Parts I and II”—will be held at the SNMMI 2013 Annual Meeting.

Many advances in nuclear medicine therapies have occurred over the past several years. SNMMI has developed a comprehensive education program for health care professionals on radioisotope therapy. With the anticipated approval of $^{223}$Ra later this year, SNMMI has created a webinar on molecular imaging and therapy for prostate cancer. In addition, the society is presenting an educational session on the topic at the American Urologic Association (AUA) Annual Meeting in early May. The AUA will also sponsor an education session at the SNMMI 2013 Annual Meeting.

Although nuclear medicine and molecular imaging procedures are fairly widely available in the United States, their quality in many other countries can be highly variable or even nonexistent. SNMMI has partnered with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to offer continuing education to those in developing countries. Webinars have been offered through the IAEA to increase the interpretive skills of nuclear medicine professionals in developing countries, and training materials on PET and PET/CT have been shared in South America and Asia.

Providing relevant and comprehensive education offerings is a pillar of SNMMI’s service for nuclear medicine and molecular imaging professionals, as well as for referring physicians.

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