Welcome to Leadership Update. This is the first in a series of columns from the SNM Headquarters designed to keep you informed about the activities of the SNM and our work on your behalf to promote the nuclear medicine profession. This month I have the privilege of announcing the results of the election for 2003–2004 officers of the SNM and SNMTS.

SNM
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Peter Conti, MD, PhD

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President-Elect
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William L. Hubble, CNMT
Lisa Ann Trembath, CNMT

Nominating Committee
Marcia R. West, CNMT
Deborah A. Erb, CNMT
Mary Beth Farrell, CNMT
Myrellen L. Merry, CNMT

Finance Committee
Peggy A. Squires, CNMT

Mid-Winter Meeting
The Mid-Winter Meeting held in Fort Lauderdale, FL, in January marked the first meeting of the House of Delegates (HOD), under the a new, streamlined structure. Co-chairs Dr. Edward Silberstein and Dr. Robert Carretta ran a successful meeting that included a 1.5-hour “environmental scan” on the state of our profession to provide background information for the Board of Directors (BOD) meeting in April. This information was also used in drafting the Society’s new strategic plan. The environmental scan is an excellent example of how the reorganized HOD, as a cross section of the nuclear medicine profession, can provide valuable input and advise the Society leadership and BOD on issues that are important to the membership. The more flexible HOD is now capable of moving rapidly to address changes in the profession—such as developments in molecular imaging.

Collaborations with Other Organizations
The Society is very interested in developing partnerships with other organizations in the nuclear medicine field. Collaboration with the American Society of Nuclear Cardiologists resulted in the “Nuclear Cardiology for the Technologist” seminar held last month, the PET myocardial glucose metabolism and perfusion imaging guidelines, and discussions with the National Institutes of Health on a nuclear cardiology...
SNM President’s Report

As my year as president of the Society of Nuclear Medicine draws to a close, I want to share some of the progress made by the Society and its many volunteer leaders and members during the past 12 months.

During this year the Society’s governance was updated, and the House of Delegates (HOD) transitioned to a broader advisory role. From the outset, the House and its leadership have provided input from a unique perspective that is representative of the grassroots membership. I sincerely compliment Dr. Edward Silberstein and Dr. Robert Carretta for their efforts that have made the restructured HOD a well-functioning body.

At its June meeting, the HOD will be asked to approve a bylaws change that will permit the formation of “Centers of Excellence” within the SNM. This new membership-based organization will work closely with the Society’s leadership and be eligible for financial input through the Society’s budgetary process. The initial impetus for this new organizational structure came from the need to address the explosive growth of PET and PET/CT. The Society has taken on this challenge and opportunity by creating the PET Center of Excellence.

The PET Center of Excellence will be in the forefront of the Society’s efforts in PET and PET/CT education. It will incorporate the PET Learning Center (now with additional sessions conducted in other areas of the country, including California) established by immediate Past-President Alan Maurer, MD, and further expand the Society’s educational efforts with additional programs in PET and PET/CT. The PET Center of Excellence will also take on government relations and advocacy roles in concert with the American College of Nuclear Physicians/SNM Government Relations Committee. We are now working to bring the PET Center of Excellence up to full speed by soliciting members and scheduling elections for this year. The PET Center of Excellence will be jointly governed by its membership and SNM leadership. Other centers will follow, and some councils may wish to become centers of excellence and increase their activities and roles within the Society.

We are now looking forward to our 50th Annual Meeting in a few weeks in New Orleans, a wonderful place to celebrate our golden anniversary. The world’s best nuclear medicine science will be showcased; more than 1,400 papers and posters have been accepted from more than 34 countries. There will be three plenary sessions featuring talks by the Society Historian, Henry N. Wagner, Jr., MD, and the first director of the National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering, Roderic I. Pettigrew, MD, PhD, and we will have New Orleans-style musical offerings before and after each plenary. The highly rated Modern Imaging Technology program organized by Dr. Michael Welch will be held again this year, immediately before the Annual Meeting. The New Orleans meeting will be the start of the Society’s 50th anniversary year, culminating in the 51st Annual Meeting in Philadelphia in June 2004. Look for anniversary year events as they are announced through Newsline and on our Web site at www.snm.org.

The new SNM and Educational Research Fund (ERF) joint development program will be kicked off at the New Orleans meeting and will be a feature of the anniversary year celebration. This joint effort positions the ERF as a philanthropic fund-raising organization in support of SNM’s education and research program.

The Mid-Winter Meeting in January marked the end of a 3-year successful trial, where we added enhanced educational offerings to the meeting’s usual schedule of governance and committee work.

We continue to reach out to other nuclear medicine organizations in North America whose members are involved in nuclear medicine practice, such as the American College of Radiology and the American Society of Nuclear Cardiology. We have found important areas of common ground where we can work together for the betterment of nuclear medicine. Similarly we are reaching out to other national and regional nuclear medicine organizations with educational efforts. We share their input through our International Advisory Group. We continue to work together with industry on workforce, reimbursement, and regulatory matters though our Industry Leaders Working Group and other joint committees. This spring our advocacy efforts took us to Capital Hill to discuss nuclear medicine issues with key Congressional staff.

In another effort to look to the future, the HOD and Board of Directors reviewed our Strategic Plan to identify the areas in which the Society will increase its efforts during next few years and the directions in which it will move.

Finally, I would like to thank Ms. Virginia Pappas, who has been invaluable to me in her first full year as executive director, and I also thank her talented department directors and staff. My thanks also go to the Board of Directors and particularly the other members of the Executive Committee, Drs. Henry Royal, Mathew Thakur, Alan Maurer, and Leonie Gordon and Ms Frances Keech and Ms Lyn Mehlberg, who have worked with me during many hours of meetings and conference calls. And finally, I want to thank my wife, Janelle, for her support during this demanding year. Although it has been a challenge working two jobs instead of one, my year as SNM president has been extremely rewarding.

Michael J. Gelfand, MD
President, SNM
It’s been a long year, but we’ve come a long way thanks to an incredible team of committee chairs, committee members, task force members and leaders, and the elected members of the SNM Technologist Section Executive Board and National Council. Their diligent work and invaluable counsel over the last year has helped us move some very difficult issues to workable conclusions.

**Fusion Imaging**

Who is best qualified to operate fusion scanners? In August last year the American Society of Radiologic Technologists (ASRT) and the SNM Technologist Section brought together a group of stakeholders to look at the emerging fusion imaging field and debate how we can ensure an available, qualified pool of technologists to run these new scanners. The group tackled this contentious issue with honesty and vigor, developing a consensus statement and the framework of a working plan for the future.

Later in the year, we filled in that framework by developing a collaboration between the SNMTS, the ASRT, the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists (ARRT), and the Nuclear Medicine Technology Certification Board (NMTCB). We now have a draft of curricula customized for technologists with various backgrounds and detailing the supplemental knowledge required to operate fusion instruments based on the certifications that an individual technologist brings to the educational process. The curricula are now being reviewed, and the ARRT and NMTCB are working together to develop certification requirements for PET/CT.

This issue has been very difficult for the nuclear medicine technologist (NMT) community, challenging a number of age-old paradigms. The course taken by the leadership of the SNMTS has tried to balance patient access with the need for NMTs to be recognized as the best qualified and legitimate operators of these machines. I know a number of technologists disagreed with our approach, and I fully understand their viewpoints, but an isolationist policy can be very risky. “Going it alone” can only work if you are in a position of strength. With only 22 states having NMT licensure versus 38 states licensing RTs and with only 18,000 NMTs compared to 210,000 RTs, the wise decision for us was to work with other groups.

**Strategic Plan**

The National Council and other key individuals sat down at the Mid-Winter Meeting to develop a new strategic plan for the SNMTS. The next step will be to flesh out the action items and objectives that constitute our plan for the future.

**Licensure**

The 107th Congress marks the third time the Consumers Assurance in Radiologic Excellence (CARE) Act has been presented to Congress. To date, the bill’s House sponsor, Representative Heather Wilson, has 25 cosponsors for HR 1024. On the Senate side we are hopeful that a sponsor will be found to present the bill to the Senate before the next recess. Harish Vaidya and the leadership of the SNMTS have been involved in revisions to the bill and in developing the procedures that will accompany it.

The Government Relations Committee headed by LisaAnn Trembath has been diligently working on standardizing state licensing legislation. Val Cronin, CNMT, from New York State, is working to assist our legislative network of technologists to help push this process forward. The lack of standard licensure, or no licensure at all in some states, has made the problem of defining standards for PET/CT operators even more complex.

**Publications**

In October last year we brought together a group of professionals to the hinterlands of Virginia to review the publications of and for the Technologist Section. The group developed an action plan to increase the number of peer-reviewed journal articles from technologists, to reassess the focus of the Journal of Nuclear Medicine Technology, and to seek out areas for development of new publications.

As the reins of leadership are passed to the next generation, the Technologist Section has many issues to work on in the next few months including advanced practice, entry-level educational standards, and PET/CT education. I look forward to assisting the new leadership in developing policies and action plans around these and other issues. I also want to express my incredible gratitude to the committee chairs, committee members, executive board members, staff at the SNM office, and leadership of the Society, especially SNM President Michael Gelfand, MD, for all the help and work over the last year as we made progress on issues of importance to the Technologist Section.
ity can provide optimal care. He noted that hospitals “must provide equipment and environmental controls that maximize the safety of their health care staff.”


The Role of Imaging

The role of imaging in SARS remains unclear. According to the study in JAMA, a significant portion of patients (25%) have negative findings on plain radiography. In the May issue of the American Journal of Roentgenology (2003;180:1247–1249), Nicolaou et al. from Vancouver General Hospital offered a preliminary case report on CT and plain film imaging of SARS. The patient was a previously healthy 55-year-old man admitted with fever, headache, dyspnea, and a slightly productive cough. Portable computed radiography (CR) showed diffuse bilateral ground-glass opacification with poorly defined nodules and mild air-space consolidation in the retrocardiac region of the right lower lobe, as well as mild cardiomegaly. A second CR, 12 hours after admission, showed diffuse air-space consolidation. The patient subsequently underwent CT, which showed extensive bilateral areas of ground-glass attenuation and dependent areas of consolidation in both lower lobes. The authors concluded that, “the imaging features of SARS are nonspecific and can range from consolidation in a lobar or nonlobar distribution to extensive ground-glass opacities and air-space consolidation characteristics of acute respiratory distress syndrome.”

At press time, neither Newsline nor the editorial offices of The Journal of Nuclear Medicine had received reports of efforts to use nuclear medicine techniques to image SARS. This is not surprising, given the difficult logistics of maintaining isolation precautions for SARS patients. However, NIH reported in early May its intention to establish a SARS unit at or near its clinical center in Bethesda, MD. This would provide the opportunity for additional imaging studies, including the possibility of white-blood-cell studies with radionuclides.

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conference. We are also meeting with the leadership of the American College of Radiology to explore areas of collaboration and the American Society of Radiologic Technologists to develop guidelines for PET/CT training for technologists.

Strategic Plan

In preparation for the BOD meeting in San Antonio, TX, April 5–6, I reviewed the current strategic plan to identify the Society’s accomplishment of objectives outlined in that plan. I am happy to report that most of the goals and objectives had been met. Therefore, a new strategic plan was developed at that meeting which will be finalized by the BOD at the Annual Meeting and then presented in this column. The old strategic plan, with completion comments on each item, can be viewed online at at www.snm.org/pdf/snm_strategic_plan_0503.pdf.

BOD Meeting

At the BOD meeting, the leadership assessed the impact of a government relations initiative that was developed from an August 2002 strategy session in which the Society’s top priorities were identified. Those issues form the backbone of our current advocacy program, which has increased SNM’s exposure on Capitol Hill as we have more proactively lobbied Congress on behalf of our members. Our legislative consultant, the law firm of Arent Fox, has assisted us in effectively communicating our top priorities and has designed a highly organized program that has resulted in more effective advocacy.

Education was another top issue at the BOD meeting. Under a previous educational strategic plan, the Society’s Education Department was tasked with designing educational offerings in PET and basic science, resulting in the PET Learning Center program and the Modern Imaging Workshop that we will be presenting for the second time at this year’s Annual Meeting. The educational strategic plan has been successfully completed and a new plan is being developed.

Industry Leaders Working Group

The SNM Nuclear Medicine Industry Leaders Working Group was formed about a year ago as a way to collaborate with representatives from industry on issues of importance to nuclear medicine. Two top priorities for this group are the shortage of nuclear medicine technologists and the FDA approval process. A Workforce Task Force has been formed to work on the shortage issue. They have several projects ongoing, including initiatives on technologist retention and targeted recruitment. An FDA/Nuclear Medicine Coalition is also being formed, designed as a broad-based, inclusive organization that will bring together the expertise and interests of nuclear medicine professionals and industry leaders to positively affect the FDA approval process. Their first meeting was scheduled for late May in Washington, DC.

Virginia Pappas, CAE
Executive Director, SNM