Robert E. Henkin Government Relations Fellowship

This past month, SNMMI’s two Robert E. Henkin Fellows, Jason Wachsmann, MD, from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center and Sara Vandehey from Compass Oncology in Portland, OR, spent a week in Washington, DC, and gained firsthand knowledge on Capitol Hill and inside federal agencies.

During their whirlwind week, the pair met with officials from Congress, the Food and Drug Administration, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Office of Science and Technology Policy, and several stakeholder organizations. The issues discussed included domestic isotope production, pharmacy compounding, funding for nuclear medicine research, Medicare reimbursement, quality measures, and patient release criteria for I-131 therapy.

Applications for the 2015 Fellowship will be accepted from September 1 - December 31, 2014. The new Fellows will be selected at the SNMMI Mid-Winter Meeting with the fellowship week to occur at a time mutually agreed upon between February and May 31, 2014.

Bracco Announces that All Remaining Kinevac Inventory has been Depleted

All remaining Kinevac inventory has been depleted, resulting in an “Out of Stock” situation by April 30. Bracco anticipates any remaining customer orders, where product has been allocated and held at their warehouse, may be shipped within the next few weeks. All unfulfilled orders will remain on the back order list.

Bracco recognizes Kinevac is a critical pharmaceutical used in hepatobiliary imaging and the significant impact this product shortage has had on patient care. Bracco does not have a definitive time line for commercially available Kinevac market units.
SNMMI Holds Annual Capitol Hill Day

SNMMI held its annual Capitol Hill Day on April 7, 2014. There were 24 participants who met with 46 congressional offices representing 17 states. The following are the main topics that were discussed:

1. A Reliable domestic supply of Molybdenum-99 (Mo-99): While the United States uses 50 percent of the world’s Mo-99, our supply comes from reactors in other countries, primarily Canada and the Netherlands. However, the Canadian facility will be phased out of commercial isotope production beginning in 2016. Additionally, President Obama’s FY 2015 budget cuts funding for the Global Threat Reduction Initiative by 24.6%. The GTRI program is tasked to work with domestic and international civilian research reactors and isotope production facilities to assist in converting technology from highly enriched uranium (HEU) to non-highly enriched uranium (non-HEU) by 2020. SNMMI supports the program, but opposes the funding cut due to lack of confidence in GTRI meeting its goal the budget’s timeframe.

2. Implementation of H.R. 4302, The Protecting Access to Medicare Act of 2014: Legislation that made permanent changes to how physicians who perform advanced imaging services are paid by connecting it to appropriate use criteria. SNMMI asked members of Congress to work with the Secretary of Health and Human Services to ensure that smaller specialty societies have a voice in selecting the AUCs that will be applicable to the program.

SNMMI’s 2014 Capitol Hill Day was a great success. Advocacy is an ongoing effort that is strengthened by the connections made between SNMMI members and their congressional representatives. We thank all those who took time out from busy schedules to participate.

SHINE Medical Technologies, Inc. to Supply Moly-99 to GE Healthcare

On April 3, SHINE Medical Technologies, Inc. (SHINE) announced that it has entered into a strategic long-term supply agreement with GE Healthcare, a division of the General Electric Company, for supply of molybdenum-99 (moly-99). Moly-99 decays into the diagnostic imaging agent technetium-99m (Tc-99m). Tc-99m’s is the most commonly-used medical isotope and is used in over 40 million medical imaging procedures per year. Under the terms of the supply agreement, SHINE will provide moly-99 to GE Healthcare on a regular basis once its facility becomes operational. The full SHINE Press Release can be found here.

President Obama Signs Legislation Linking Physician Payments to Appropriate Use Criteria

On April 1, President Obama signed H.R. 4302, the Protecting Access to Medicare Act of 2014. This legislation makes permanent changes to how physicians who perform advanced imaging services are paid by connecting it to appropriate use criteria. These permanent changes were included as part of the temporary one year patch to the Sustainable Growth Rate system.

These changes state that Secretary of Health and Human Services must launch (by 2017) a program that encourages the use of AUCs for advanced diagnostic imaging services (ADIS). Additionally, no later than November 15, 2015, the Secretary, in consultation with stakeholders, will choose which AUCs will be included in the program.

The main objective of an AUC is to identify patients who will most appropriately benefit from a procedure, thus resulting in a more effective and equitable allocation of healthcare resources. AUCs, which must be created or endorsed by national medical specialty societies or other provider-led entities, must also have stakeholder consensus; be scientifically valid and evidence-based; and be based on publicly available studies that are published and reviewable by stakeholders. Additionally, advanced diagnostic imaging services are defined as diagnostic magnetic resonance imaging, computed tomography, nuclear medicine (including positron emission tomography), and other diagnostic imaging services specified by the Secretary in consultation with physician specialty organizations and other stakeholders.

Earlier in the day, the Senate failed to pass Senator Ron Wyden’s (D-OR) bill, S.2157, the Commonsense Medicare SGR Repeal and Beneficiary Access Improvement Act of 2014. Senator Wyden’s bill would have permanently repealed the Medicare Sustainable Growth Rate system and would have used Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funds as a payment offset. In February, the House Ways & Means Committee, House Energy & Commerce Committee, and Senate Finance Committee introduced a bipartisan, bicameral bill known as the SGR Repeal and Medicare Provider Payment Modernization Act of 2014. However, disagreements over pay-fors stalled progress on the bill.
SNMMI Releases Q&A Regarding the Price Increase for MAA

SNMMI has released a Coding & Reimbursement Q&A in response to the recent price increase for macroaggregated albumin (MAA). The Q&A, "Price Increase for Macroaggregated Albumin (MAA)," focuses on how this change affects the average Medicare patient as well as who absorbs the cost.

All current Coding & Reimbursement Q&As, which are available only to SNMMI members, can be found here.

NRC Advisory Committee on Medical Uses of Isotopes Names SNMMI Members to Fill Open Seats

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) selected two SNMMI members to fill open seats on the Advisory Committee on Medical Uses of Isotopes (ACMUI). They are Vasken Dilsizian, M.D., as Nuclear Cardiologist and Philip Alderson, M.D., as Health Care Administrator.

Dr. Dilsizian is chief of the nuclear medicine division and professor of radiology and medicine at the University of Maryland School of Medicine in Baltimore. He is certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine, the American Board of Cardiovascular Medicine and the American Board of Nuclear Medicine. Dilsizian has also served as the director of nuclear cardiology at the National Institutes of Health.

Dr. Alderson currently serves as dean of the School of Medicine and vice president for medical affairs at St. Louis University. He is board certified by the American Board of Nuclear Medicine and the American Board of Radiology (Diagnostic).

The ACMUI advises the NRC on policy and technical issues related to regulating the medical uses of radioactive material. The full announcement can be found here.

Bracco Diagnostics Inc. Launches New CardioGen-82® Website

On April 1, 2014, Bracco Diagnostics Inc. launched a new CardioGen-82® (Rubidium Rb 82 Generator) Website with Enhanced Resources. Additional resources for healthcare providers to improve their use of cardiac positron emission tomography (PET) myocardial perfusion imaging (MPI) can be found on the website. It now includes relevant information about the latest clinical research, reimbursement details and appropriate use criteria. Additional information can be found in the CardioGen-82® press release here.
SNMMI Weighs In

SNMMI provides comments to government stakeholders on a multitude of issues. For more information, please visit the SNMMI website or contact the HPRA department directly.

- The American College of Nuclear Medicine and the Society of Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging submitted comments to The Joint Commission on April 9, 2014 regarding Diagnostic Imaging Standards Changes for Radiologists’ Qualifications and Competency.

Important Upcoming Events/Deadlines

- SNMMI’s Annual Meeting is in St. Louis, MO from June 7-11, 2014. Click here for more information.
- Advisory Committee on the Medical Uses of Isotopes (ACMUI) will hold a meeting on May 8-9, 2014

Contact hpra@snmmi.org to be notified by email of future newsletters.