Message from the President

Prem Soman, MD, PhD

Hearty congratulations to Dr. Robert Gropler for being the recipient of the prestigious Hermann Blumgart award this year. Rob’s contributions to the field of Nuclear Cardiology have been remarkable, and this is indeed, a well-deserved honor. For those of us who have the pleasure and privilege of a continuing and close association with Rob, his warm heart, wit and wisdom are a source of inspiration and delight. I wish him well, and many, many more years of success.

The fields of Nuclear Cardiology and Cardiac Molecular Imaging continue to grow in an environment of great opportunity and challenge. A recent molecular imaging symposium hosted jointly by the SNMMI and ASNC, and attended by physician leaders, NIH, FDA and the Industry, highlighted the tremendous opportunities that molecular imaging holds for enhancing our understanding of disease and therapy. But it also reminded us of numerous regulatory and financial challenges that decelerate the clinical translation of these approaches. Regulatory hurdles continue to daunt the field, including the CMS AUC mandate, slated to go into effect in January 2017.

But these challenges should not distract us from positive developments that continue to encourage and inspire. The permanent “SGR fix” was a welcome end to a long and contentious regulatory battle. Clinical nuclear cardiology continues to expand beyond perfusion imaging. F-18 FDG imaging for cardiac sarcoidosis is now firmly in the clinical realm, and is a great opportunity for imaging to positively influence diagnosis and therapy, and thus demonstrate value in patient care. Tc-PYP imaging for ATTR-amyloidosis is making a clinical resurgence, and early indications are that the PET agents F-18 Florbetapir and C-11 PIB hold promise for this application. Radiation dose continues to decrease with the use of creative stress protocols and the new high-efficiency SPECT cameras. In my own lab, we are now able to perform myocardial perfusion imaging in most patients with effective doses of less than 2 mSv. Clinical studies such as PROMISE remind us that, when given a choice among functional testing modalities, physicians overwhelmingly choose radionuclide imaging.

My term as the President of the Cardiovascular Council ends in June 2015, at the annual meeting. As I prepare to transition leadership to Dr. Thomas Schindler, I would like to express my gratitude for the opportunity to serve. I am confident that the field of nuclear cardiology has a bright, indeed scintillating, future.

Hermann Blumgart Award Profile: Robert Gropler, MD

By vote of the Cardiovascular Council Board and membership, the 2015 Blumgart Award has been conferred to Robert Gropler of Washington University in St. Louis, in the midst of a remarkable career in which he and his colleagues have been at the forefront of cardiac metabolic imaging with PET from its embryonic days. The Blumgart Award is the highest honor bestowed by the Cardiovascular Council of the SNMMI.

Dr. Gropler is currently a Professor of Radiology, Medicine and Biomedical Engineering at the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. He also serves as the Senior Vice-Chair of Radiological Sciences
and Chief of the Cardiovascular Imaging Laboratory at the Mallinckrodt Institute of Radiology. He is a graduate of the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine, and completed his residency in Internal Medicine at Northwestern University, where he served an additional year as Chief Medical Resident. Subsequently, he completed a Cardiology Fellowship at Loyola University, followed by a two-year Research Fellowship at the Mallinckrodt Institute of Radiology, where he has continued to push the frontiers of cardiac imaging since 1987.

According to Dr. Gropler, “I knew early in my career I wanted to focus on cardiac metabolism, and PET was creating opportunities for insight not previously obtainable. The situation at Wash U was also quite unique.”

He credits the learning environment at Wash U, and the outstanding mentorship of some of the key individuals that influenced his career.

“I was fortunate to be mentored by some of the very best people the field had to offer. They included Barry Siegel, Ed Geltman and Steve Bergmann as my three co-mentors. Supplementing this wonderful group were Michel Ter-Pogossian, Michael Welch and Burt Sobel. Together they provided me a comprehensive training in all aspects of performing by primarily PET-based cardiovascular imaging research from both a technology and applications perspective all along the entire translational spectrum. A truly remarkable multi-disciplinary team.” As a bit of trivia, “I was even at the University of Cincinnati at the same time as Markus Schwaiger. While we never met there, maybe it was some kind of a good omen for my career in PET.” (Editor’s note: Professor Schwaiger was the recipient of the Blumgart Award in 2006).

Of course in the earliest days of PET, circa 1987, PET scanners were not quite so replete with options and efficiencies we may take for granted today. “Back then we were actually building the systems we wanted to use for PET imaging; I can recall some long nights of soldering metal parts and connections together. Moreover, computer power was more much more limited than we enjoy today, as we ran tape drives all night, overnight, to complete the processing that we could evaluate the next day.”

During his career, Dr. Gropler has produced a veritable library of 160 original clinical, clinical research and invited publications; presented over 300 abstracts at congresses worldwide; conducted over 250 lectures and invited Professorships. He serves on the Editorial Board of the Journal of Nuclear Cardiology, Journal of the American College of Cardiology, JACC-Cardiovascular Imaging, and Circulation-Cardiovascular Imaging as well as on numerous NIH study sections and review groups for numerous other national and international funding agencies.

He is has had continuous NIH support for > 20 years and been principal- or co-investigator over 40 research trials between Academia, Industry and Government, spanning a wide range of topics from developing new techniques to perform myocardial perfusion, metabolic and molecular imaging to their application in study of aging and gender influences, myocardial viability, diabetes and heart failure, that cross over SPECT, PET and CMR techniques.

Dr. Gropler serves many diverse professional societies across cardiovascular medicine; he is a Fellow of the American College of Cardiology and American Society of Nuclear Cardiology. He has served on the Cardiovascular Council Board of Directors since 2012, culminating with his election to Vice-President Elect in 2014. In addition, he Co-Chaired the SNMMI/ASNC “Cardiovascular Molecular Imaging Think Tank: Devising Strategies to Bridge the Translational Divide”, that took place on April 16th and 17th of this year.

Dr. Gropler will receive the Blumgart Award on Sunday, June 7th after his Award Presentation, which in past years is always one of the highlights of the Annual Meeting.

His presentation will focus on “how our field has a long history of applying medical practice more precisely and why we are well-positioned to lead the way into this newest rendition of precision medicine”, he added. “I intend to present the elements of our work that I believe are critical to success, and that are necessary to enable a real renaissance in cardiovascular medicine”.

Please join the Cardiovascular Council in congratulating Dr. Robert Gropler, the 2015 Blumgart Award winner, and make plans to be in attendance for his award presentation on Sunday at the Annual Meeting.
Intern Update:

Wengen Chen, MD, PhD

To say Dr. Chen had a very productive internship would be a significant understatement. In his second year, Wengen attended the SNMMI Future Leaders Academy at the Mid-Winter meeting in San Antonio, Texas. He continues to support the educational activities of the Council, and working in conjunction with former board member and Council President Mark Travin, MD, organized the CE session entitled “Beyond Myocardial Perfusion Imaging with SPECT and PET” on Wednesday morning in Ballroom II.

“The CE session will cover a range of applications for cardiac imaging not related to myocardial perfusion”, he stated. “I strongly recommend it for anyone who is curious about, or already exploring the newer techniques for evaluating cardiac innervation, mechanical dyssynchrony, infections and serial monitoring of ventricular function.”

He will also be providing the lecture on “Identifying Cardiac Infections with FDG PET” during that session in Baltimore.

The Cardiovascular Council is grateful for the many contributions of Wengen Chen as Council Intern, whose term ends at the Annual Meeting. His outstanding service to the membership of the Council has helped to continue a very productive Intern program.

James Thackeray, PhD

The Cardiovascular Council would like to welcome James Thackeray, PhD, as the CVC Intern for the 2015-2017 term.

Dr. Thackeray is currently the Postdoctoral Fellow in Preclinical Molecular Imaging for the Department of Nuclear Medicine at the Hannover Medical School in Germany. He completed his PhD at the National Cardiac PET Centre at the University of Ottawa Heart Institute in Canada. He has already established an impressive list of published manuscripts and abstracts, and his work is focused on clinically and biologically relevant research questions, toward the ultimate goal of strengthening the bonds between basic science and clinical molecular imaging. The CVC looks forward to reporting his contributions to the Council and to the field at large.

2015 Annual Meeting Preview:

We would like to invite you to attend the following CVC sponsored events during the 2015 SNMMI Annual Meeting in Baltimore, Maryland, June 6-10, 2015.

Cardiovascular Council Business Meeting – Sunday, June 7, 6:00pm – 6:30pm, Room 315 of the Baltimore Convention Center, Baltimore, MD.

Categorical Session:
- Molecular and Correlative Imaging in Heart Disease - Saturday, June 6, 8:00am – 4:00pm, Ballroom I

The Cardiovascular Council is also sponsoring the following continuing education sessions:
- Contemporary SPECT Technology – Saturday, June 6, 4:30pm, Room 314
- Read with the Experts: Case-Based Session – Sunday, June 7, 4:30pm, Rooms 321-322
- Nuts and Bolts of Cardiac PET Imaging – Monday June 8, 10:00am, Rooms 321-322
- Optimizing the Nuclear Cardiology Lab – Monday, June 8, 12:30pm, Room 314
- Cardiovascular Boot Camp I – Monday, June 8, 3:00pm, Ballroom II
- Cardiovascular Boot Camp II – Monday, June 8, 4:45pm, Ballroom II
- What’s New In Nuclear Cardiology - Tuesday, June 9, 8:00am, Room 316
- Advances in Heart Failure Imaging - Tuesday, June 9, 10:00am, Room 316
- New Targets: Tracer and Techniques in Nuclear Cardiology - Tuesday, June 9, 12:30pm, Room 317
• **Beyond Myocardial Perfusion Imaging with SPECT and PET** - Wednesday, June 10, 8:00am, Ballroom II

CVC Awards:
• **Hermann Blumgart Lecture and Award Session** – Cardiovascular Nuclear Medicine at the Vanguard of Precision Medicine in Cardiovascular Disease - Sunday, June 7, 2:45pm, Room 315

For information on these events and more please visit the [SNMMI 2015 Annual Meeting Website](#).

**We look forward to seeing you in Baltimore, Maryland!**