Preparations for a Big Year

By Scott Holbrook, BS, CNMT, FSNMMI-TS, President-Elect

The Society of Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging Technologist Section (SNMMI-TS) is currently making preparations for a potentially historic year in the field. Despite serious questions about the state of the economy and the status of health care, 2013 offers many reasons for excitement and enthusiasm.

It has been more than 10 years since the passing of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Modernization Act (FDAMA) which outlined the approval process for new PET biomarkers, and new tracers are finally receiving FDA approval. The first proprietary PET biomarker for amyloid imaging received FDA approval during the spring of 2012. A host of others are slated for potential approval in the next few years. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) have scheduled a public meeting in January to receive and discuss evidence to support reimbursement for beta amyloid PET imaging. A positive outcome at this meeting would result in a beneficial environment for three additional biomarkers for amyloid imaging currently in clinical trials.

In addition to this meeting there is optimism surrounding other initiatives with CMS and the FDA. Public comments have been received regarding the discontinuation of the CMS national non-coverage policy for new PET procedures and the coverage with evidence determination (National Oncology PET Registry) program. If successful, this effort would result in an eased transition from FDA approval of a new PET procedure to CMS reimbursement. These two initiatives alone will have significant importance.

Continued on page 2, see Message from the President-Elect
on the future of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging.

Despite not having received congressional approval of the Consistency, Accuracy, Responsibility and Excellence in Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy (CARE) bill, progress has been made in the areas of professional credentialing for medical imaging professionals. The Conference of Radiation Control Program Directors (CRCPD) recently approved Part Z of its suggested state regulations which address two important functions of a nuclear medicine technologist’s scope of practice: performing CT scans and injecting radiopharmaceuticals and related drugs.

While these initiatives are exciting, our professional society must begin making preparations to take advantage of future opportunities. The SNMMI-TS met in December to create a new draft strategic plan which will guide our professional society for the next five years.

In addition to continuing to work diligently for the eventual passage of the CARE bill, other strategies to ensure proper training standards and credentialing will be pursued simultaneously. Undergraduate and graduate programs for technologists will continue to be developed, improving opportunities for current and future nuclear medicine technologists. Task forces will be established to proactively address obstacles associated with new technologies such as beta amyloid imaging, cardiovascular PET imaging, SPECT/CT, PET/MR, BSgi and PEM, and SPECT dopamine receptor imaging. Best practices will be identified and provided to the membership in multiple formats including live meetings and workshops, online programs, white papers, and publications. This will speed the transition and adoption of these new technologies into departments and ultimately the hands of nuclear medicine technologists.

The leadership team anticipates a very challenging and active year. We look forward to meeting these challenges with you and embracing the future we began to build together several years ago.

Once again, it’s time to start making plans to attend the SNMMI Annual Meeting. This year marks our 60th Annual Meeting, and 2013 takes us to breathtaking Vancouver, British Columbia, in Canada.

Governance meetings begin on Thursday, June 6. Many SNMMI-TS meetings are open to all members, so take some time to find out what the society is doing to help meet your needs. The categorical sessions will kick off the educational meeting and will cover various topics including cardiology, PET and general nuclear medicine. General educational sessions begin Saturday, June 8, and continue through Tuesday, June 11. This year the Technologist Program Committee is planning to offer more than 30 sessions that will provide an in-depth review of molecular imaging technologies, clinical applications, translational and advanced research topics.

The SNMMI plenary session opens the SNMMI Annual Meeting on Sunday morning with a myriad of other special sessions to follow, including the technologist paper presentations, which begin that afternoon. Take some time to hear what your fellow colleagues are doing in the field.

Once again, we will wrap up the educational meeting with the SNMMI-TS hosting the Technologist Party on Tuesday evening. This year’s theme is the “Soul Tech Train.” If you plan to attend, expect to have fun!

Vancouver offers a gorgeous natural setting with all the amenities of a big city. While in the city you can check out the Vancouver Art Museum, the Vancouver Aquarium, or Science World (perhaps a highlight for the science-minded professionals attending the SNMMI meeting). For a way to connect with nature, Vancouver offers beaches, whale watching, floatplane tours, hiking and more. And don’t miss Vancouver’s jewel, Stanley Park, with its ever-blooming gardens, pristine coastal areas and roughly 500,000 cedar, fir and hemlock trees.

Visit the SNMMI website for the most up-to-date meeting information. You will be able to utilize the online meeting planner as well as register for the meeting, book your hotel and get information on traveling to Canada. We look forward to another successful meeting. Hope to see you there.
sistent with the technologist’s national certification” and “the duties must be within the national organization’s scope of practice.” The Florida Bureau of Radiation Control is reaching out to the American Society of Radiologic Technologists (ASRT) and SNMMI for these documents. A scope of practice and practice standards already exist specifically for CT as defined by the ASRT. However, a SOP specifically for PET does not yet exist.

The SNMNI-TS charged the SOP Task Force with the goal of creating a SOP and clinical performance standards specific to the PET technologist who is not a certified nuclear medicine technologist. This detailed document will be similar in style to the SOP and clinical performance standards that already exist for nuclear medicine technologists, but will only outline the duties of a PET technologist. The task force is attentive to the fact that the language used in the PET clinical performance standards should not exclude nuclear medicine technologists who are not PET certified from performing PET procedures. The task force’s goal is to present the PET SOP and clinical performance standards to the SNMMI National Council of Representatives (NCOR) for consideration at the Mid-Winter Meeting in New Orleans, LA.

As chair of this task force, I would like to recognize Nancy McDonald Deloach, NCT, RT, CNMT, and her working group, Tricia Peters, BS, CNMT, PET, and Cindi Luckett-Gilbert, MHA, CNMT, PET, FSNMNI-TS, for their hard work in addressing this need with such expediency.

VOICE Box

Michele Egberts, CNMT, FSNMMI-TS, Chair, SNMMI-TS Continuing Education Committee

Happy New Year! I would like to share with you the latest information on what the SNMMI-TS Continuing Education (CE) Committee is working on for 2013.

2013 SNMMI Annual Meeting

This year we are headed to beautiful Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, for the 2013 Annual Meeting where educational programs that are essential to the progress of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging will be offered. In addition to social activities, exhibits, special workshops and plenary sessions, technologists can look forward to many CE opportunities. This year there are more than 30 continuing education sessions available to technologists. The Technologist Section program starts on Saturday, June 8, with three superb categories: General Nuclear Medicine – 2013: Back to Basics; Emerging Technology: Discover the Future; Nuclear Cardiology in 2013: Preparing for the Future and Clinical Trials Network, and ends on the afternoon of Tuesday, June 11. The physician/scientist CE and scientific sessions are also approved for VOICE and VOICE+ credit.

For a detailed program preview, visit www.snmmi.org/education.

Saving Your VOICE Certificates!

Periodic audits by national certifying organizations or licensing states require submission of “proof” for reported educational credits. SNMMI-TS members enjoy the benefit of automatic tracking and reporting of educational credits to the national certifying organizations and an easily accessible printed VOICE transcript for submission to regulatory agencies for renewal of state licenses. But what happens if your membership is not renewed and you don’t have access to your VOICE transcript? What happens if next year you are forced to make that hard choice between rent and renewal? How will you maintain your nuclear medicine certification or state license if you can’t submit proof of required educational credits?

The simple answer to that question is: save your certificates! Most sponsoring organizations for continuing education programs will provide certificates of completion at the conclusion of the program or once the participant has gone online to complete the required documentation for attendance. All sponsors are required to maintain documentation of participation for attendees to their programs. If you have a lapse in membership and cannot access your VOICE transcript, your certificates of attendance will provide you with the necessary documentation for certification or licensure renewal. If the state or national certifying organization needs additional information regarding the educational program, contact and related information can be found on that certificate. So remember, SAVE THOSE CERTIFICATES OF ATTENDANCE! Your career may depend on it!

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Focus on the Fellow: Daniel T. Guarasci, MS, RPh, FSNMMI-TS

By Kathy S. Thomas, MHA, CNMT, PET, FSNMMI-TS

Daniel Guarasci’s, MS, RPh, FSNMMI-TS, career path into the nuclear community began with an introduction into the science while completing courses as an undergraduate student in biology/physics at Buffalo State College. A course in radiation science sparked an interest, and learning that there was a health care field called nuclear medicine was all it took to send him along a career path with which he rapidly fell in love. Daniel entered the nuclear medicine program and received his Bachelor of Science degree in nuclear medicine technology from the University at Buffalo in 1987. During his junior year, Daniel was awarded a summer internship at Central Radiopharmaceutical Services, Inc. (CRS). There he assisted in radiopharmaceutical production and recognized an exciting alternate career pathway that would lead him to multiple degrees from the University of Buffalo including a master’s degree in Radiation Science (1992), a Bachelor of Science degree in Pharmacy (1996) and ultimately a Doctorate of Pharmacy degree in 2004. Daniel holds multiple certifications including CNMT, BCNP, ABSNM (Radiopharmaceutical Science and Radiochemistry) and ABSNM (Nuclear Medicine Physics and Instrumentation).

Today, Daniel works for CRS Nuclear Services in Buffalo, NY. He is the supervising pharmacist and radiation safety officer of the facility. Although the hours are long—most often starting in the middle of the night—Daniel notes that the affiliation of the radiopharmacy with the University of Buffalo provides him with the opportunity to share his passion in nuclear physics and nuclear pharmacy with young professionals entering the field. He would like to continue promoting nuclear medicine for many years to come by teaching and lecturing to ensure that this modality is used to the best of its ability when diagnosing disease.

Daniel became an active member in the SNMMI in 1990. As a member of the Eastern Great Lakes Chapter, Daniel served as the exhibitor coordinator and student paper evaluator during the 1990s. He notes that student participation was high during his involvement and he likes to think that he played a key role in that success. On the national level, Daniel has served as a member of the SNMMI-TS Awards Committee, the Education Committee and as the SNMMI representative to the American Board of Science in Nuclear Medicine (ABSNM). He notes that the highlight of his involvement with the SNMMI/SNMMI-TS was serving as president of the ABSNM in 2006-2007.

Mentors along the way of Daniel’s career include Joseph Vilani, MS, a board certified physicist, who taught him all aspects of nuclear medicine physics and Robert Ackerhalt, PhD, a board certified pharmacist who was instrumental in starting one of the first centralized nuclear pharmacies in the country. Daniel states that both gentlemen were extremely instrumental in his success and passion within the nuclear medicine profession.

Daniel is married “to a beautiful lady…that I love more today than I did 23 years ago when I married her.” Daniel and his wife, Dawn, have four children. When asked what he is most passionate about, he notes, “my children. No matter what is going on in my professional/personal life, I try very hard not to miss one of their events and be involved as much as possible, from homework to coaching, I love being a Dad!”

When asked why he wanted to become a Fellow, Daniel notes that his chapter, and most specifically, Val Cronin, CNMT, FSNMMI-TS,—at that time president of the SNMMI-TS—encouraged him to seek Fellow status. He notes that his involvement in the SNMMI has allowed him to meet and work with many knowledgeable people and expand his abilities as a professional.

SNMMI-TS Awards Scholarships

Congratulations to the following SNMMI-TS members who were recently awarded scholarships from the SNMMI-TS and the Education and Research Foundation for SNMMI.

2012 SNMMI-TS Sue Weiss Clinical Advancement Scholarships ($500)

In honor of Susan C. Weiss, SNMMI-TS past president and former executive director of the Education and Research Foundation for SNMMI, this scholarship serves to support certified nuclear medicine technologists (CNMTs) who are pursuing clinical advancement through didactic educational programs.

- Jerome Loichinger, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH
- Jeffery Meden, BS, CNMT, NCT, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI

2012 SNMMI-TS Bachelor’s Degree Completion Scholarships ($4,000)

This scholarship supports current nuclear medicine technologists who are pursuing a bachelor’s degree related to their nuclear medicine careers.

- Scott McKee, Bachelor’s of Science in Organization Management, Bethel College, Elkhart, IN
- Shannon Whitten, Bachelor’s of Science in Medical Imaging, Mercy College, Toledo, OH

2012 SNMMI-TS Advanced Practitioner Program Scholarships ($5,000)

This scholarship serves to support a student who is pursuing an advanced practitioner program to advance his/her career in nuclear medicine.

- Scott Degenhardt, CNMT, BS, ARRT(T), Bachelor’s of Radiation Science (Nuclear Medicine), University of Nebraska Medical Center, Omaha, NE
January 23-27, 2013
SNMMI 2013 Mid-Winter Meeting; New Orleans, LA
Host: SNMMI and American College of Nuclear Medicine
Contact: www.snmmi.org/mwm2013

February 28, 2013
Northern California SNMMI Chapter 2013 Mid-Winter Meeting; Pleasanton, CA
Host: Northern California SNMMI Chapter
Contact: Sue Hogeboom, wrsocietynucmed@gmail.com, (425) 893-8410

February 27 – March 2, 2013
State-of-the-Art Molecular Imaging in Cancer Biology and Therapy; San Diego, CA
Host: SNMMI and American Association for Cancer Research
Contact: www.imagecancer2013.org
Early-Bird Registration Deadline: January 13, 2013

March 8-9, 2013
Greater New York Technologist SNMMI Chapter Meeting; Atlantic City, NJ
Host: Greater New York Technologist SNMMI Chapter
Contact: Ellie Mantel, ezimmer@comcast.net, (609) 513-3229

March 9-10, 2013
Pacific Northwest SNMMI Chapter 2013 Spring Meeting; Portland, OR
Host: Pacific Northwest SNMMI Chapter
Contact: Sue Hogeboom, wrsocietynucmed@gmail.com, (425) 893-8410

April 11-13, 2013
42nd Annual Mid-Eastern Chapter SNM Meeting
Host: Mid-Eastern SNMMI Chapter
Contact: Eleanor Dicks, eleano4mecsnm@aol.com, (240) 304-7842

June 8-12, 2013
SNMMI 2013 Annual Meeting
Host: SNMMI
Contact: www.snmmi.org/am
Early-Bird Registration Deadline: April 11, 2013

Learning and Leisure at the 2013 SNMMI Mid-Winter Meeting

The SNMMI Mid-Winter Meeting, this year held January 23-17, 2013, in New Orleans, LA, is just around the corner! This year’s venue offers rich culture, a mild climate—especially for those up north—and, perhaps most importantly, an exceptional education program and networking opportunities to advance your career in nuclear medicine and molecular imaging.

SNMMI-TS has developed a first-class program that offers current and emerging technical, preclinical, and clinical applications of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging. VOICE credits for the 2013 Mid-Winter Meeting have been approved for a maximum of 36.50 continuing education hours. Courses of interest for technologists include: Technologist How-To: Improving PET Imaging in Clinical Research; Coding and Reimbursement and PET Imaging Sensitivity in Oncology; An Evening with Cardiology: Past Present and Future; and New PET Pharmaceuticals in Brain Imaging.

SNMMI’s Clinical Trials Network will host educational sessions to provide physicians and technologists training for how to participate in pharmaceutical-sponsored, multicenter clinical trials. In addition, the second Sino-American Conference will also take place during the Mid-Winter Meeting, where SNMMI will meet with its Chinese colleagues and work towards continuing global efforts to advance nuclear medicine and molecular imaging.

Mid-Winter Meeting attendees will also be able to network with their peers at the Exhibitor Welcome Reception and the American College of Nuclear Medicine Banquet and Awards Dinner. New technology will also be displayed in the Mid-Winter Meeting exhibit hall, which will feature approximately 25 booths representing medical device manufacturers, radiopharmaceutical companies and others.

New Orleans offers plenty of ways for you to enjoy the city during your downtime. As an attendee, you’ll be centrally located within an atmosphere of endless excitement from the heart of one of the world’s greatest cities. Arise to a breakfast of beignets and café au lait just steps from the French Quarter. You can spend an afternoon shopping Royal Street and the French Market, relax in Jackson Square, dine at a world famous restaurant in the French Quarter, or hear the sultry tones of a late night jazz show.

The entire city is easily accessible from the Sheraton New Orleans Hotel, where the Mid-Winter Meeting will be held. Plus, you’re just steps from many famous attractions, including the Aquarium of Americas and the IMAX Theatre, the National D-Day Museum, Harrah’s New Orleans Casino and popular shopping destinations such as Canal Place, Riverwalk Marketplace and JAX Brewery.

Please be sure to visit the SNMMI website for more details and to register for the meeting. Hope to see you there!
Clinical Education: A Key Component of Student Learning

By Joseph Hawkins, M.S.Ed., CNMT

Understandably, one of the most important aspects of a student technologist’s education is the experience they receive during clinical rotations. Clinical internships allow the student to integrate knowledge gained in the classroom with real life experience. In fact, nuclear medicine students typically spend more hours at their clinical sites than they do in the classroom. As an educator for the past 17 years, I have heard both good and bad from students who evaluate our clinical sites and from technologists who serve as clinical instructors and interact with our students on a daily basis. For this article, I surveyed a group of past graduates and technologists asking for their opinions on a number of different subjects with regards to clinical education including the advantages and disadvantages of students in the department, the characteristics of ideal clinical instructors and students, and the importance of useful student evaluations. The results are summarized below.

As a technologist, there are certainly pros and cons to having students in the department. Among the advantages, students tend to keep the technologists on their toes since students are always asking questions and requiring explanations about how to perform various tasks. A student is also an extra pair of hands that can help with various tasks like restocking supplies, calling for patients, answering phones, transferring patients, and assisting with equipment and procedure set up. As they progress further in their education, they can take the lead in performing various patient procedures, thus taking on more of the responsibilities of a technologist while still under supervision. A department also gets to see how a student would function in their setting so when an employment opportunity is available, they are already quite familiar with the student. There are also some disadvantages. With new students, the department work flow may slow down as the technologist needs to take more time explaining procedures. In addition, there will be more paperwork to complete since the technologist must evaluate the student’s competency and progress throughout their rotation.

Of course, the benefits of clinical education are not limited to the clinical site. The students gain valuable experience in areas including clinical procedures, time management, critical thinking, interactions with patients and staff, scheduling, and dealing with “non-textbook” situations. Students also experience how procedures can be performed in various ways in different departments. In order for the student to maximize his or her clinical education, technologists stated that it is very important for students to be engaged in the learning process by being motivated, asking appropriate questions, taking notes and having a genuine interest in the field.

When it comes to clinical instruction, students identified many characteristics of an ideal clinical preceptor. Among these are enthusiasm, patience, a passion for teaching, and the ability to explain difficult concepts. In addition, students need to be pushed by the clinical staff to expand their knowledge. They may not appreciate it as a student, but graduates mentioned the benefits of having to find answers to their questions as opposed to simply being given the answers.

One of the potential problem areas for clinical education involves student evaluations. Technologists have to evaluate students on an ongoing basis and may wonder if it is more important to be nice or honest with feedback. Based on the survey results, students want an honest evaluation of their performance. They do mention, however, that they prefer to hear constructive criticism that can possibly improve their future performance. Also, students want to know right away when they are not performing as expected. They don’t want to wait until the end of the evaluation period to hear for the first time that they are not performing up to par. It is not always easy to give negative feedback to a student who is well liked by the department staff, but it is vital for the student’s education that they are made aware of their deficiencies.

Clinical education is a necessity for student technologists but places an additional burden on the clinical staff due to the extra time and effort needed for student instruction and evaluation. However, there are many benefits to being involved in the education of future technologists. In the not so distant future, your student may become a co-worker and your additional effort and work will pay off.

Travel Awards Available for Annual Meeting Abstract Presenters

SNMMI-TS is pleased to announce the availability of the SNMMI-TS Travel and Student Travel Awards in 2013 to help support registration, travel and accommodations for nuclear medicine technologists (NMTs) and students who will be presenting abstracts at the SNMMI Annual Meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, in June. A limited number of $1,000 awardees will be selected in May 2013. Selection of recipients will be based on the abstract ranking given by the SNMMI Annual Meeting SNMMI-TS Abstract Reviewers. The awards will be distributed proportionally to NMTs and NMT students based on the total number of applications received in each group.

In order to apply for a travel grant, the NMT and/or NMT student must have submitted an abstract and been accepted for presentation (oral or poster) for the SNMMI Annual Meeting. Presenting authors can apply for the travel awards after notification of abstract acceptance (estimated in March 2013). Those interested can visit www.snmmi.org/grants for more information.

The deadline to submit an application for the travel grants/awards is April 15, 2013. All applicants will be notified of the final results in early May. The SNMMI-TS Travel and Student Travel Awards are made possible through a grant from the Education and Research Foundation for SNMMI.
Focus on the Fellow: Kathy Thompson Hunt, MS, CNMT, FSNMMI-TS

I became involved with the SNMMI-TS through mentorship. I entered the field in 1976 and was introduced to the SNMMI-TS in the early 1980s by my colleague and mentor, Marcia Boyd, CNMT, FSNMMI-TS, who was very active in the Technologist Section (TS) and served as SNMMI-TS president in the 1980s. Marcia encouraged me to go to the Annual and Mid-Winter Meetings and to attend committee meetings. She introduced me to people involved in leadership and included me in TS activities. Marcia instilled in me the value of active participation in my professional organization, and I am extremely grateful to her.

Due to personal and professional obligations in the 1990s, I was not very active in the SNMMI-TS. During that time, I was fortunate to be involved in transitioning all of Baptist Memorial Hospital’s radiology certificate programs and the nursing diploma program into baccalaureate programs. It was a once-in-a-life-time experience as we determined general studies requirements and the curricula to prepare dual certified technologists with a foundation in radiography and specialty in nuclear medicine technology, radiation therapy or sonography. We obtained candidate status for regional accreditation and began the process of developing catalogs, policies and procedures, as well as hiring faculty to teach general educational courses and the program curricula. In 1998, we graduated our first class of dual-certified technologists from Baptist College of Health Sciences with a Bachelors of Health Sciences and a major in Radiological Sciences.

In 2003, I was nominated by the Association of Schools in Allied Health Professions (ASAHP) to attend the Coalition of Allied Health Leadership (CAHL) meeting in Washington, DC. Also, in attendance was a nominee from SNMMI-TS, Mary Beth Farrell, MHA, CNMT, PET, FSNMMI-TS. We became team members working on a CAHL project, and she encouraged me to become active in the SNMMI-TS. Following the meeting, Mary Beth nominated me to run for SNMMI-TS Executive Board Member-at-Large. I was elected to that position and have been involved in SNMMI-TS governance ever since. Through my involvement with the SNMMI-TS, I have grown personally and professionally. I get to collaborate with professionals from all over the United States and our international partners. By networking, I have had an opportunity to hear different perspectives and learn different ways of performing procedures or about new technology as it is being developed. As nuclear medicine colleagues, we come together for a common purpose; we want nuclear medicine to continue to advance and become the leader in molecular imaging and therapy.

In the past 10 years, I have been honored to serve as the president of my chapter, on numerous national committees, on the SNMMI-TS Executive Board, and as president of the SNMMI-TS. I am very passionate about the field of nuclear medicine because of the science involved, and because it is a continually changing field. Our field continues to evolve with new radiopharmaceuticals and instrumentation. I have experienced, several times during my career, a nuclear medicine procedure that is replaced by another modality, and then along comes a new radiopharmaceutical, and nuclear medicine is evaluating a different organ system or diagnosing and treating a different disease. This field has remained exciting to me because my passion is learning and teaching. I enjoy watching the “lights” come on in my students’ eyes as they realize we can actually use the science of physics and the human body’s own mechanisms to evaluate and treat disease at the system, organ and even the molecular and cellular level.

I believe that nuclear medicine has a promising future and will continue to be an integral part of the medical standard of care in diagnosing and evaluating disease. With the use of hybrid imaging and new biomarkers, we will provide specific information used in diagnosing disease, as well as guiding therapeutic decisions. By incorporating molecular imaging into the name of our professional organization, we are transitioning nuclear medicine into the wider scope of molecular imaging and validating that nuclear medicine is the foundation of all molecular imaging.

I am honored to have enjoyed a long career in nuclear medicine technology. I want to continue to give back to my profession by making sure the field of nuclear medicine continues to evolve as health care evolves. We are experiencing a time of transition which is always very difficult. I think it is extremely important for nuclear medicine technologists to pull together as members of the SNMMI-TS in order for us to have a voice on issues such as scope of practice, licensure, educational standards, laboratory accreditation and health care reform. All of these issues affect us as technologists, and we need to be actively involved if we are going to be in charge of our own destiny. It is very important that regulators, legislators, physicians, other health care providers and hospital administrators know the education and skills that make up a nuclear medicine technologist.
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