NEWS AND VIEWS

DECEMBER 2013

News and Views is the newsletter of the British Nuclear Medicine Society. It comprises articles and up to date, relevant information for those working within the nuclear medicine community both nationally and internationally. Readers are invited to submit material, meeting announcements and training opportunities to the Editor: Dr Jim Ballinger, Department of Nuclear Medicine, Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust, Great Maze Pond, London, SE1 9RT. Tel: + 44 207 188 5521, Fax: + 44 207 188 4094, E-mail: james.ballinger@gstt.nhs.uk

Nuclear Medicine Communications 2013, 34:1240–1241

The autumn meeting of BNMS Council was held at the Methodist International Conference Centre adjacent to Euston Station (continuing the ecclesiastical theme, the winter meeting will be at the Friends Meeting House in the same vicinity). Once again it was a very full agenda.

There was further discussion of tariffs for nuclear medicine and PET. It is felt that PET has a higher profile and is more likely to see changes in tariffs. We need to find a way to raise the profile of nuclear medicine with Monitor, the agency responsible for setting tariffs. A registry has been set up to capture non oncological uses of PET; however it appears that reporting is not complete. It is important to have actual workload in order to inform future commissioning.

There was discussion of the Future Hospital Commission which issued its first report in September (http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/projects/future-hospital-commission). One of the most difficult adjustments for nuclear medicine will be seven day working, particularly in terms of staffing. From the point of view of the 99mTc generator, seven day working makes eminent sense. However, radiopharmacy staffing is already stretched and it would be difficult to cover additional days in a manner which is safe for the patient, avoids excessive exposure to staff, and remains compliant from a regulatory standpoint.

As many will be aware, there is a discrepancy between the ARSAC paediatric dose reduction and the EANM paediatric dose card. A working party is looking for a sensible reconciliation of these two points of view.

It was noted that there has been consolidation within the commercial cyclotron community, with Alliance Medical buying Erigal and also the UK PET operations of IBA, giving them five cyclotrons in total.

NICE has evaluated selective internal radiation therapy (SIRT) with 90Y microspheres for treatment of liver tumours. This therapy will be commissioned centrally at 10–12 specialist centres.

BNMS Annual Meeting 2014, Harrogate

The 2014 BNMS Annual Spring Meeting will be held at the Harrogate International Centre, 11–14 May. The Sunday boot camp will focus on diagnostic tips and essentials of reporting. The programme Monday through Wednesday consists of continuing education sessions with invited national and international speakers, specialist topics for each of the craft groups, and submitted papers and posters. There will be a special track of cross sectional anatomy for clinical practitioners. As always, there will be a commercial exhibition hall, and the welcome reception on Monday evening will be held in the exhibition hall to give you an informal opportunity to meet all the vendors.

The Annual Lecture will be given by Prof Osman Ratib, University of Geneva, Switzerland, and the Highlights Lecture by Dr Simon Hughes, Nottingham, UK. The deadline for abstract submission is 6 January 2014. We encourage as many of you as possible to submit your work for presentation in Harrogate. If you are nervous about speaking to a crowd of hundreds (or even tens), why not submit a poster? Your participation is important, and there are prizes for the best in a variety of categories.

Practitioner Training Programme

Hot on the heels of the Clinical Pharmaceutical Science (CPS) structured training programme which I described last month (with one error: the posts are Band 6, not Band 7 as I stated), we have the long awaited and much needed introduction of a centrally funded Practitioner Training Programme at Band 5. As with CPS, it has a very short lead time, with the first intake in January 2014. The programme will be offered by the University of Cumbria in Lancaster, with possibly two further programmes to follow. The programme leads to a
3-year BSc(Hons) in Healthcare Science. The emphasis is clinical, with most of the time being spent in hospitals. In the 3 years there are only 18 weeks of intensive study at the university, complemented by distance learning. It is hope that this initiative will ensure that there is a trained workforce to take nuclear medicine into the future and will reduce concerns about succession planning.

**Regulation upon regulation**

How many levels of regulation are really necessary? We often say that nuclear medicine, and specifically radiopharmacy, is one of the most highly regulated areas of medicine, with responsibility to pharmaceutical, radiation, environmental, transport, security, and occupational authorities, not to mention safety of the patient at the end of the process. This newsletter deadline comes in the midst of an MHRA inspection which somewhat colours my comments.

We must walk a fine line. We are dealing with ionising radiation and there are real risks involved, but we go to great lengths to quantify and minimise those risks. The pharmaceutical risks are extremely low due to the small chemical quantities administered with most diagnostic radiopharmaceuticals. Indeed, it has been argued that radiopharmaceuticals should be regulated solely as radiation sources rather than drugs; this was considered for the revised Basic Safety Standard. There may be a move toward lighter touch regulation, such as the proposed exemption in the revised EU Clinical Trials Regulations.

There have been examples of inspectors from different agencies having divergent opinions. The siting of hand washing sinks adjacent to radiopharmacies is one case. Medicines inspectors don’t want any potential source of aerosol borne microorganisms anywhere near a pharmaceutical clean room, whereas radiation inspectors want staff to be able to wash off any spilled radioactivity without spreading contamination any further than necessary.

It is probably too much to ask for joined up thinking. No agency is willing to give up power and control. My biggest concern with the expansion (dare I say explosion) of documentation is that it is setting us up to fail. Complex record keeping systems are so time consuming to keep up to date that omissions are inevitable. Computerisation solves some problems but creates as many through lack of flexibility. In 30 years I have seen enormous changes, but I can’t honestly say that there has been a significant benefit in terms of direct patient safety, only in improved clinical governance.

**Christmas!**

As this is the December issue I would like to wish all readers the compliments of the season. The Christmas present I await with greatest anticipation is a replacement News and Views editor as my term is almost complete!

**Meetings in the UK**

**Postgraduate Course in Radiopharmacy**
- Date: 10–13 December 2013
- Venue: St Thomas’ Hospital, King’s College London
- Contact: teachingadmin-imaging@kcl.ac.uk

**UK Radiopharmacy Workshop**
- Date: 17 January 2014
- Venue: The Beeches Conference Centre, Bournville, Birmingham
- Website: www.ukrg.org.uk

**3rd Annual SPECT/CT Imaging Symposium: Current status and future direction of SPECT/CT imaging**
- Date: 24 February 2014
- Venue: British Institute of Radiology, London
- Website: www.bnms.org.uk

**BNMS Spring Meeting**
- Date: 11–14 May 2014
- Venue: International Centre, Harrogate
- Website: www.bnms.org.uk

**International meetings**

**Imaging Infections and Inflammation**
- Date: 12–14 December 2013
- Venue: Rome, Italy
- Contact: alberto.signore@uniroma1.it

**3rd Tubingen PET/MR Workshop**
- Date: 17–21 February 2014
- Venue: Tubingen, Germany
- Website: www.pet-mr-tuebingen.de

**NuklearMedizin 2014**
- Date: 26–29 March 2014
- Venue: Hannover, Germany
- Contact: office@nuklearmedizin.de

**ESRR14: 17th European Symposium on Radiopharmacy and Radiopharmaceuticals**
- Date: 24–27 April 2014
- Venue: Pamplona, Spain
- Website: http://esrr14.earnm.org

**Society of Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging Annual Meeting**
- Date: 7–11 June 2014
- Venue: St Louis, Missouri
- Website: www.snmmi.org/am2014

**Gordon Research Conference: Metals in Medicine**
- Date: 22–27 June 2014
- Venue: Proctor Academy, Andover, New Hampshire
- Website: www.grc.org

**11th Congress of World Federation of Nuclear Medicine and Biology**
- Date: 27–31 August 2014
- Venue: Cancun, Mexico
- Website: www.wfnmb.org

**EANM14: Annual congress of the European Association of Nuclear Medicine**
- Date: 18–22 October 2014
- Venue: Goteberg, Sweden
- Website: www.eanm.org

An ongoing list of events can be found on the BNMS website at www.bnms.org.uk.

Readers are invited to forward details of any relevant meetings which they would like to be included in this list. Please be aware that, owing to publication deadlines, the newsletter is written two months prior to publication.

Copyright © Lippincott Williams & Wilkins. Unauthorized reproduction of this article is prohibited.