

November 28, 2005

Dr. Keith O. Hodgson
Chair, BERAC
Director, Stanford Synchrotron Radiation Laboratory
Department of Chemistry
Stanford University
Stanford, CA 94305

Dear Chairman Hodgson and Members of BERAC:

The Society of Nuclear Medicine (SNM) is extremely disappointed with the near elimination of funding for the Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Science Biomedical and Environmental Research (BER) Medical Applications and Measurement Science Program in the fiscal year (FY) 2006 budget. Essentially, this funding will be reduced from approximately \$37 million in FY '05 to \$13.6 million in FY '06, with most of the remaining money going to research in areas unrelated to nuclear medicine.

Basic nuclear medicine research has been funded by the DOE (previously the Atomic Energy Commission) for over fifty years, producing such cornerstone discoveries as Positron Emission Tomography (PET), small animal PET imaging systems, the molybdenum-99m technetium-99m generator, and much more. Annually, more than 20 million men, women and children require noninvasive molecular/nuclear medicine procedures. Nuclear medicine procedures, such as positron emission tomography (PET) scans, are a vital tool in the diagnosis and treatment of patients with cancers of the brain, breast, blood, bone, bone marrow, liver, lungs, pancreas, thyroid, ovaries, and prostate.

Until these budget cuts, there were over eighty basic nuclear medicine research projects at various educational institutions, national laboratories, and companies funded through the BER Medical Applications program. The research included a wide variety of topics, from small animal imaging technologies, to the discovery of new radiotracers for the diagnosis and treatment of a variety of diseases at earlier stages. Medical Applications research projects perform the basic science research (physics, engineering, chemistry, etc.) necessary for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and others to follow-up and translate into common medical practice.

The Biological and Environmental Research Advisory Committee (BERAC) has always been supportive of this basic nuclear medicine research and even recommended an expansion of the DOE radiopharmaceutical sciences research in the April 2004 report, "Radiopharmaceutical Development and the Office of Science." However, the United States government unfortunately decided to eliminate this program because of the current climate of restricted budgets, and now the fight against cancer, Alzheimer's, and other diseases is on the cutting room floor. If the DOE and OMB continue to follow the current course in zeroing out basic nuclear medicine research within the Medical Applications and Measurement Science Program, the next generation of new and exciting developments in the area of molecular imaging and therapy may never come to fruition.

Please contact Hugh Cannon, SNM Director of Public Affairs, at 703-708-9000 / hcannon@snm.org should you have any questions or concerns. Thank you for your valuable time and attention.

Sincerely,



Peter S. Conti, MD, PhD
President
Society of Nuclear Medicine