

Radiotheranostics Practice in India- Advancing to Precision Oncology

It gives us immense pleasure to share that the Society of Nuclear Medicine-India (SNMI) is organizing its 54th Annual Conference (SNMICON-22) from 8-11th December, 2022 at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi. The SNMI was founded in 1967 and since then, the society has been continuously organizing its annual conferences without a break over the last 55 years. The Indian college of Nuclear Medicine (ICNM) is the academic wing of the society, engaged in educational activities by organizing thematic workshops, CMEs and webinars in different parts of the country. The society has four regional chapters which are also involved in organizing educational activities for students/trainees in their respective regions. The Indian Journal of Nuclear Medicine (IJNM) is the official publication of the society which has gained significant prominence since its inception, and is publishing cutting edge research submitted by national and international researchers. The journal is indexed in PubMed/Medline and has an ever rising impact. The December supplement of the journal is dedicated to scientific abstracts and proceedings of the annual conference.

Our predecessors have worked very passionately to bring the specialty and the society to its current eminent stature. Our annual SNMI conferences consistently engage high quality scientific presentations, lectures and invited talks by both young professionals and established leaders in the speciality from across the world. The leaderships of SNMI in the presidential tenures of Prof. Rakesh Kumar and Prof. Baljinder Singh signed crucial memorandums of understanding (MOU) with the two prominent nuclear medicine societies of the world i.e. SNMMI and EANM which have gone a long way in showcasing the emerging prominence of our society and the cutting-edge research work done by our Indian colleagues. These MOUs were renewed this year under the emerging leadership of Dr. Harkirat Singh (President, SNMI) and Dr. Ankit Watts (Secretary, SNMI). The SNMI as part of these MOUs has been getting complimentary exhibition booths which facilitate our scientific, educational and social interactions with scientists and leaders in Nuclear Medicine from all over the world.

The revival of the joint SNMI, ICNM and Indo-American Society of Nuclear Medicine (IASNM) symposia during the annual meetings is now a consistent endeavour. The IASNM leadership has an active participation at the SNMI

meetings and has been instrumental in starting a joint SNMI-IASNM award (Alavi-Takalkar-Kumar Award) for best research work in clinical oncology, with the inaugural award planned to be awarded this year during SNMICON-22 at New Delhi. The corpus of \$16,000 was contributed by Prof. Abass Alavi and the IASNM. There shall be 3 awards (1st/2nd/3rd) in this category and Prof. Alavi, the pioneer of PET imaging has graciously agreed to join us in-person for handing out the inaugural awards.

Prof. Richard Wahl, Director, Mallinckrodt Institute of Radiology, Washington University in St. Louis, USA, a pioneer in radiotheranostics and response assessment using FDG PET, and the immediate past President of SNMMI is an invited faculty and will be joining us in-person at SNMICON-22 in New Delhi. He shall personally interact with Indian Nuclear Medicine fraternity to explore scientific and research collaborations. Prof. Wahl's mission is to achieve harmonization among the different nuclear medicine practices through-out the world in the practice of radiotheranostics and response assessment. Prof. Richard Baum, a world-renowned expert in theranostics and the current President of International Centres for Precision Oncology is also an invited faculty and would be engaging with Indian Nuclear Medicine Centres of Excellence for imparting training in theranostics for overseas students. Prof. Frank Roesch from Mainz Germany who is integral part of ICPO and is inventor of 68Ge/68Ga generator. He is regular attendee of our annual meetings and likewise he is also coming this year and is giving an invited talk. Prof. Gary Ulaner, President, American College of Nuclear Medicine (ACNM), and our own Dr. Ashwin Singh Parihar (Immediate past President- ACNM, Students' wing), Instructor in Radiology, working with Prof. Richard Wahl at Washington University in St. Louis, are also joining us as invited faculties and delivering talks as part of the IASNM delegation.

Prof. Amol Takalkar, the current President of IASNM along with an eminent team comprising the IASNM delegation are also joining us in the conference as well as in the valedictory function. The society has already been awarding two annual awards during the annual conference – the Shakuntala Krishnamurthy Award for best research abstract in hepatology, and Prof. N Ramadas Award for best research abstract in thyroidology. The Society has a long-lasting tradition of awarding three orations to physicians and scientists of not just national,

but international repute, during the annual conference. This year, Prof. Baljinder Singh from PGIMER, Chandigarh (Immediate Past-President, SNMI) has been awarded the Homi Bhabha Oration, Prof. Amol Takalkar (President, IASNM) the Vikram Sarabai Oration, and Prof. Kavitha Reddy (NIMS, Hyderabad), the Dr Brigadier Mazumdar Oration. The society also provides travel grants to students and in-training members for attending the annual conference. Our biggest strength is the cohort of our extremely dynamic and highly competitive youth entering into our amazingly promising medical discipline.

Today, we witness an exponential growth of nuclear medicine radio-theranostics. What started with ^{131}I in Graves' disease and thyroid cancer, has today evolved to the era of theranostics with not just beta- but alpha therapy as well, in prostate cancer, neuroendocrine tumors and several other refractory malignancies. We have to ensure that India gets to the forefront of the clinical and research theranostics. It requires an intricate collaboration between Nuclear Medicine Physicians, Radiochemists, physicists and especially our colleagues at the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre. Presently, one of the main reasons for the tardy pace of the alpha program is the exorbitant cost of importing it from the EU nations. If this currently unmet need can be fulfilled by BARC by augmenting the existing isotope production techniques, or by alternative strategies, the targeted therapies using alpha emitters could be provided at an affordable cost to our patients.

Undoubtedly, India's prominence and innovative research work is being recognized at the global forum. At this year's SNMMI meeting at Vancouver, Prof. CS Bal's pioneering work on ^{225}Ac -DOTATATE therapy in advanced NETs was awarded as the best research abstract of the year. Several such awards have also been received by other Indian stalwarts in the previous SNMMI and EANM meetings. This year, at EANM-22 in Barcelona, India ranked 4th in total number of accepted scientific abstracts and the major number of abstracts were contributed by three institutes i.e TMH (Mumbai), AIIMS (New Delhi) and PGIMER (Chandigarh). To not just sustain, but exponentially grow this ranking, the large corporate medical institutes and

newer AIIMS should be encouraged to submit high quality research abstracts and must contribute to the academic events, both nationally and internationally.

Due to the continued prominent presence of our colleagues, India has been declared as the Highlight Country during the SNMMI-23 meeting scheduled to be held at Chicago, USA (24-27 June, 2023). This is a rare and gratifying distinction to our country and specialty, and needs a showcase of our cutting edge and innovative research work both in Nuclear theranostics and radiopharmaceuticals. We invite the leaders of nuclear medicine at both public and private institutes in India to participate with enthusiasm and encourage their colleagues, and trainees to submit high quality abstracts for the conference. The last date for submission of abstracts is 11th January, 2023. In addition to showcasing our research work, as highlight country, we also need to co-host the opening reception in the exhibit hall to showcase the culture of India (decorations, music, food, etc) and to create a highlight country lounge in the exhibit hall. All the accepted scientific abstracts from India shall be highlighted (flagged) in the Meeting Poster Hall. The Indian Flag shall be displayed along with the flag of the United States at the Plenary Sessions and the Exhibit Hall. Dr. Munir Ghesani, the current President of the SNMMI will be joining us in-person as an invited speaker at SNMICON-22 to witness the growth of Nuclear Medicine in India. His personal visit to our annual meeting shall help us in making effective preparations towards the upcoming 'Highlight country' event in June, 23 at Chicago.

The participation of one and all is highly solicited to make India proud of this great opportunity and make it a success!

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