

When was the Last Time You did Something for the First Time?

ICRT 2012 is only a few days away and all of us are now eagerly waiting for another outstanding WARMTH conference. I was informed that snow has already arrived in Levi and the entire Levi environment appears pristine, pure, and absolutely divine. Many of our participants will probably experience snow for the first time and that will be an experience of a life time. No matter how old you are, how experienced you are, and how mature you are, doing something for the first time in life could be sometimes unique, extraordinary, and exciting. So often, our days are built around routine activities day in and day out, consisting of endless cycle of work, breakfasts, lunches, and dinners, family, household chores, and social obligations. In order to make life a bit more meaningful, a bit more exciting, and something special, one need to come out of this routine and do something out of the box – this could be as simple as playing with snow balls in Levi or as complex as labeling Rhenium with Lipiodol in Ulaanbaatar.

Life as a Nuclear Medicine Professional can be very exciting and challenging. In my 33 years as a nuclear medicine physician, I have never had a dull moment. Life has not been that easy, but the dynamics of nuclear medicine keeps you going on and on. As a specialty, nuclear medicine probably offers the possibility of “doing something for the first time,” more often than any other specialty in medicine. Being “non-invasive and all pervasive,” radionuclide techniques offer the unique advantage of studying human biology, organ function, and cell metabolism using simple tools and techniques based on broad principles of tracer kinetics. Almost every nuclear medicine professional must have experienced the excitement of doing a new thing for the first time in his/her life. We all remember vividly those instances of reading the first liver scan, reporting the first bone scan, injecting the first dose of colloid into a joint, treating the first thyrotoxicosis patient with radioiodine, administering high doses of I-131 to our first thyroid cancer patient, assisting in the development of a new

radioconjugate like Re-188 Lipiodol, treating the first patient of liver cancer, reading the first PET/CT scan, managing the first patient of PRRT in our institutions, publishing the first paper in a journal, or presenting the first paper at a conference. No matter how simple or complex, how small or large the tasks are, anything done for the first time remains in our memory forever, give great satisfaction, and provide us the necessary stimulus to do more and to do better.

Several years ago I used to work at the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna. That assignment truly opened my heart and mind to the world. I could see the tremendous potential existing in the developing countries of the world, and how professionals could excel and produce outstanding results given the minimum help and encouragement at the right place at right time. One such example was our work in the field of liver cancer, where the developing countries of the world truly lead in the development of a new therapeutic radiopharmaceutical (Re-188 Lipiodol) for the treatment of Hepatocellular carcinoma. These countries take the credit of developing a new drug and treating liver cancer for the first time using Re-188 Lipiodol. The credit goes to the nuclear medicine professionals of Vietnam, Mongolia, India, Colombia, Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, and Korea for their great contribution in this field. Today we have several organizations around the world, who have shown their interest to take this further to the next step and make the product available for routine clinical use at an affordable price to patients, especially in the developing countries, where the disease is highly prevalent and the resources are truly meager.

Several years ago when a young nuclear medicine physician friend of mine wrote an e-mail with just the following line: “Wah! SPECT in my country – I cannot believe this,” I could realize my young friend’s happiness and excitement, the feeling of doing or experiencing something for the first time. For some this could be just another SPECT camera, but for some this is “first SPECT” camera and that makes all the difference.

WARMTH is a new and vibrant International Organization. It has taken us many years to come to this stage of our existence; and I am sure it will take many more years to establish WARMTH as a truly great International Organization. I have no doubt that with

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contributions from every nuclear medicine professional in the world, we will carry the message of WARMTH further, which would bring happiness, relief, and cure to our patients all over the world.

Many of our participants might not have ever involved or practiced any form of therapeutic nuclear medicine. For some, nuclear medicine still remains a diagnostic specialty. This is not true. Ours is a truly clinical specialty. Therapeutic nuclear medicine is growing rapidly and in many nuclear medicine departments it constitutes almost 25-30% of our workload. So what are you waiting for? It doesn't matter, if you are young or old, junior or senior, wherever you are, if you have not started using radionuclide therapy yet, it is time to do so. It is time to do something for the first time in your life, start with the simplest things, create

a small (one small room) "Thyroid Clinic" in a corner of your nuclear medicine unit or department, and treat your first Thyrotoxicosis patient with 10 mCi of Iodine-131. You will feel the difference; you will experience the ecstasy of "doing something for the first time."

Ajit Kumar Padhy

Editor in Chief, World Journal of Nuclear Medicine,
Department of Nuclear Medicine and PET,
Singapore General Hospital, Singapore, 169608
E-mail: ajitpadhy1@yahoo.co.uk

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