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Summary of Panel 4, Nuclear Medicine Applications
Workshop on Training Requirements for Chemists in Nuclear Medicine, Nuclear
Industry, and Related Areas

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Introduction

The application of nuclear and radiochemistry to the practice of medicine and in biomedical research has been described as one of the intellectual frontiers of chemistry related to the national well-being as described in the 1985 Pimentel Report (Opportunities in Chemistry, National Academy Press, Washington, DC 1985, page 265). The "chemistry of life processes" was given as one of the five frontiers deserving high priority. The practice of nuclear medicine, biomedical research and all support related activities depends on the use of radioactive materials. It is therefore axiomatic that nuclear and radiochemistry play a vital role in the continued growth of these fields. It follows that the need for training in radiochemistry is an imperative. It is a matter of great concern to this panel that while the demand for knowledgeable people is increasing, the supply from the core educational facilities of this country is decreasing.

Discussion

We recognize that research in nuclear medicine is not a common interest of faculty members in universities with graduate programs in chemistry; thus there is a problem in attracting chemists to this field. We further recognize that public awareness, indeed fears of nuclear matters, is regrettably real, yet we are also aware that few patients seeking medical care will deny themselves that care because radioactive materials are involved. Therefore we consider that a central issue is the dissemination of information on opportunities in this area and on the benefits to the public in order to stimulate greater interest and awareness in university chemistry departments.

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