

June 17, 2009

Byron Dorgan, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development  
Senate Appropriations Committee

Robert Bennett, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development  
Senate Appropriations Committee

Peter J. Visclosky, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development  
House Appropriations Committee

Ed Pastor, Vice-Chairman  
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development  
House Appropriations Committee

Rodney P. Frelinghuysen, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development  
House Appropriations Committee

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

On behalf of the American Society of Nuclear Cardiology (ASNC), I am writing to express our concerns with the crisis regarding medical radioisotopes used in effective detection and evaluation of patients with heart diseases and other medical conditions such as cancer. The immediate threat arises from the lack of access to a reliable, consistent supply of medical isotopes that thousands of American patients rely on every day.

ASNC is a greater than 5,000 member professional medical society that represents physicians, scientists and technologists who work in the nuclear cardiology field which represents over 50% of all the nuclear medicine studies performed in the U.S. These studies allow physicians to make diagnoses, determine outcomes and select managements in patients with known or suspected heart disease without having to use more invasive and expensive procedures. ASNC urges Congress to address the shortage of medical isotopes in this year's Energy and Water Development appropriations bill by 1) providing sufficient funding to the National Nuclear Security Administration to develop a reliable source of medical isotopes – preferably from U.S. production – and 2) providing government financial incentives to private industry to expedite isotope production.

In mid-May, the Canadian nuclear reactor that supplies nearly half of the world's demand for medical isotopes shut down indefinitely. The majority of the U.S. market supply of Technetium-99m (Tc-99m), a radioisotope derived from Molybdenum-99, which is produced by the reactor,

has been greatly impacted by the shutdown. Each year more than 20 million Americans benefit from nuclear medicine tests involving medical isotopes, including Tc-99m. In the absence of a reliable supply of these isotopes, there is no guarantee that physicians will have the proper medical necessities to perform vital testing and diagnose life-threatening diseases at the earliest possible stage. As millions of cases have shown, patient outcomes and survival rates are greatly increased as a result of early diagnosis, while delayed testing and late diagnosis lead to greater complexity, risks and cost of care.

As a medical society and part of the medical community, ASNC remains committed to working with regulators and industry in helping ensure that patients receive the most appropriate care during periods of limited supply of medical isotopes, and we strongly urge Congress to move swiftly in funding both short- and long-term solutions to this crisis.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Emily Gardner, ASNC Director of Health Policy, at 301-215-7575 or via email at [egardner@asnc.org](mailto:egardner@asnc.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Mieres". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

Jennifer Mieres, MD, FASNC  
President, American Society of Nuclear Cardiology