



HEALTH
PHYSICS
SOCIETY

CONGRESS AND FEDERAL AGENCIES MUST TAKE ACTION TO ENSURE A DOMESTIC SUPPLY OF MEDICAL RADIOISOTOPES

POSITION STATEMENT OF THE HEALTH PHYSICS SOCIETY*

Adopted: September 2008

Contact: Richard J. Burk, Jr.
Executive Secretary
Health Physics Society
Telephone: 703-790-1745
Fax: 703-790-2672
Email: HPS@BurkInc.com
<http://www.hps.org>

The Health Physics Society (HPS) believes that strengthening our nation's ability to produce radionuclides (radioisotopes) for the medical sciences must become a national priority. Improving the domestic production of radioisotopes can only be accomplished through timely congressional and federal agency action.

The Health Physics Society encourages research in the radiation sciences, including health-related research that relies on the safe use of radioisotopes. Our nation has long recognized the need for the study of physiological processes, molecular functional imaging, and diagnosis and treatment of diseases using radioisotopes. Modern nuclear medicine has improved the health and welfare of our citizens.

Today, the United States faces a serious shortage of domestically produced medical radioisotopes. With near total dependence on foreign supplies, our nation has lost its competitive edge in the science and technology of radioisotope production for medical applications.

Society members recognize that scientific progress in radiotracer and radiopharmaceutical development, molecular imaging, and targeted radionuclide cancer therapy depends on radioisotope availability. Historically, the domestic production of radioisotopes has been largely a responsibility of the federal government infrastructure and national laboratories managed by the Department of Energy. Today, this is not a priority for the agency. The requirements for applications in medical research are largely driven by the needs of researchers and programs within the various agencies of the Department of Health and Human Services. Domestic private-sector producers are supplying radioisotopes with few incentives at levels far below the need.

The Health Physics Society advocates a federal government commitment to radioisotope production, dedicated production facilities, and the concomitant education and training of scientists. These needs are as described in a report of the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies (NRC-IOM 2007).

To strengthen the supply of radioisotopes necessary to meet critical national needs and to reduce our nation's dependence on foreign suppliers, the Health Physics Society recommends fundamental changes to federal government programs and policies for radioisotope production:

1. Establish a joint program office of the Department of Energy and the Department of Health and Human Services to focus on national needs, prioritize activities, plan, and coordinate the federal response.
2. Provide adequate congressional funding for radioisotope production, including funds needed to plan, construct, and operate dedicated radioisotope production facilities.
3. Take firm measures to preserve the essential raw (or starting) materials, such as thorium-229, that are needed for radioisotope production.
4. The Department of Energy and the Department of Health and Human Services should engage the private sector and universities by supporting federal-private partnerships and grants to promote radioisotope production, cultivate technology innovation, and foster commercialization opportunities.

Reference

National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (NRC-IOM). Advancing nuclear medicine through innovation. Committee on State of the Science of Nuclear Medicine. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press; 2007.

* The Health Physics Society is a nonprofit scientific professional organization whose mission is excellence in the science and practice of radiation safety. Since its formation in 1956, the Society has grown to approximately 6,000 scientists, physicians, engineers, lawyers, and other professionals representing academia, industry, government, national laboratories, the Department of Defense, and other organizations. Society activities include encouraging research in radiation science, developing standards, and disseminating radiation safety information. Society members are involved in understanding, evaluating, and controlling the potential risks from radiation relative to the benefits. Official position statements are prepared and adopted in accordance with standard policies and procedures of the Society. The Society may be contacted at 1313 Dolley Madison Blvd., Suite 402, McLean, VA 22101; phone: 703-790-1745; fax: 703-790-2672; email: HPS@BurkInc.com.