

25 years of AAPM

The American Association of Physicists in Medicine was established in 1958 to promote scientific communication among practicing physicists in medicine. Today the AAPM has a membership of over 2000 and is the largest organized body of medical physicists in any country. Members of the AAPM, through their research and development activities and as important participants of a medical professional team, play a significant role in promoting the delivery of high-quality health care to the public. Medical physicists have made important contributions to medical practice, especially in the diagnosis and treatment of cancer. Early in this century, physicists played a vital role in developing the use of radiation for the eradication of cancerous tissues. Today medical physicists are working on diagnostic imaging and the application of computers to medicine. John Laughlin discusses some of the history of these developments in his article on page 26, and Paul Moran, Jerome Nickles and James Zagzebski describe the current state of medical imaging on page 36. Medical physicists are also involved in areas such as audiology, ophthalmology, endocrinology, physiology, cardiology, physical therapy and general medical instrumentation. Because of the impact of advances in high technology, medical physics has grown rapidly, and today it is recognized as an essential discipline in medicine.

The purposes of AAPM are to promote the application of physics to medicine and biology, to encourage interest and training in medical physics and related fields and to prepare and disseminate scientific and technical information regarding medical physics. Its members are primarily and professionally engaged in the application of physics to medicine and biology in medical, research or educational institutions.

In addition to meetings and scholarly publications, AAPM sponsors annual summer schools for members and other interested scientists. The topics covered in recent summer schools were:

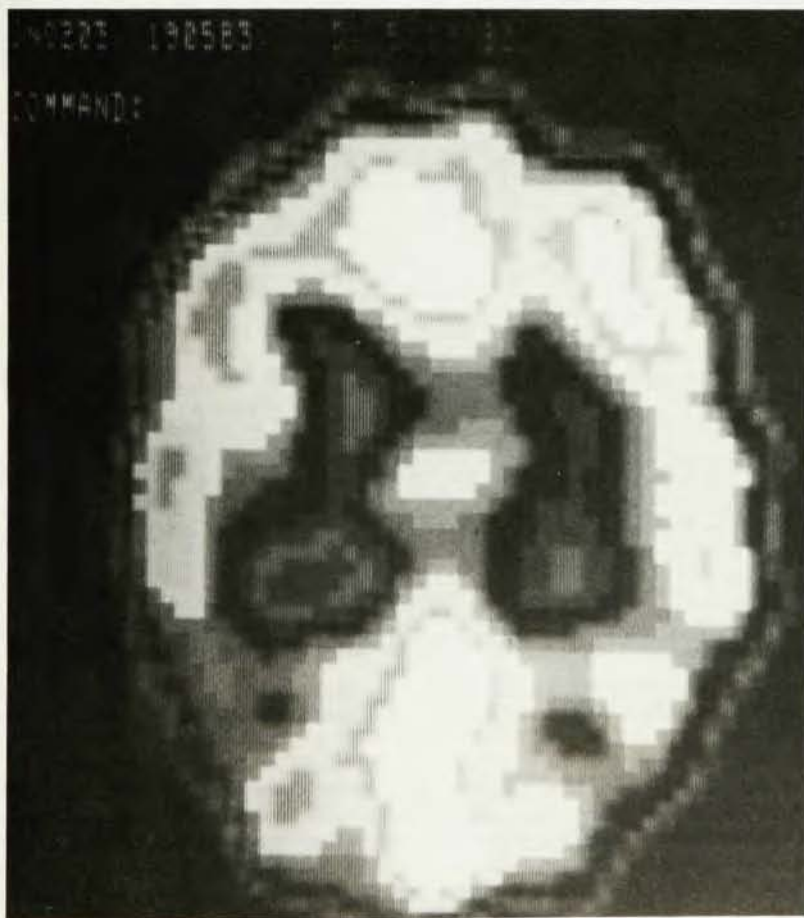
physics of medical imaging—recording-system measurements and techniques (1979); tissue imaging and characterization with computerized tomography and ultrasound (1980); physical aspects of hyperthermia (1981); advances in radiation therapy treatment planning (1982). This year's school is an update on physics of nuclear medicine and is being held at the Fairleigh-Dickinson University campus in Madison, New Jersey, the week of 25 July.

In cooperation with radiological and governmental groups, AAPM has encouraged the development and promulgation of quality-assurance protocols in medical physics. Together with the

National Cancer Institute the AAPM initiated the Radiological Physics Center for quality-assurance activities in certain government-sponsored radiation-therapy projects. Later, this arrangement with the NCI was extended to Regional Centers for Radiological Physics for quality-assurance activities in diagnostic radiology, medical imaging and treatment procedures. US medical physicists also play an active international role.

The AAPM Headquarters Office is located in the AIP building in New York City, and inquiries should be addressed to: Elaine Osterman, Executive Secretary, AAPM, 335 East 45th Street, New York, NY 10017; telephone (212) 661-9404.

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Metabolic demand for oxygen in the brain. This tomographic image of the brain shows the distribution of the positron-emitter O^{15} a few seconds after the subject inhaled labeled oxygen. See page 36. (Photo from R. J. Nickles, University of Wisconsin.)