

# Cardiac Matters

NASCI LEADS THE WAY IN ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION FOR CARDIOVASCULAR IMAGERS.

By Brett Hansen

Cardiovascular imaging is a rapidly evolving specialty, and the need for educational materials and advocacy efforts may be at an all-time high. The North American Society for Cardiovascular Imaging (NASCI) is encouraging its members to continue necessary training and find opportunities to speak up. The society offers educational events, such as its 39th annual meeting, held Sept. 24–27, 2011, in Baltimore, while continuously developing dynamic resources for its members.

## Multidisciplinary Experiences

The annual meeting provided information for imagers and cardiologists who were at various stages in their careers, with topics ranging from general cardiac and coronary anatomy to the specifics of imaging pediatric cardiomyopathy. For those wishing to understand the basics, the meeting commenced with two cardiovascular boot camps. Other sessions included Cutting-Edge Technology, Advances in MRI, and case-based reviews in pediatric cardiology and coronary CT.

Attendees of the conference received more than just an education in their subspecialty, however. The keynote speaker, John A. Patti, M.D., FACR, chair of the ACR Board of Chancellors and a thoracic radiologist at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, taught conference participants about the challenges and opportunities the current environment of health-care reform presents to cardiovascular imaging — and to the entire imaging community. Patti highlighted the effect of the Affordable Care Act of 2010 as well as the many ongoing regulatory processes that create health-care reform on an annual basis, including never-ending attempts to reduce fair compensation for imaging. He also discussed the necessary role of

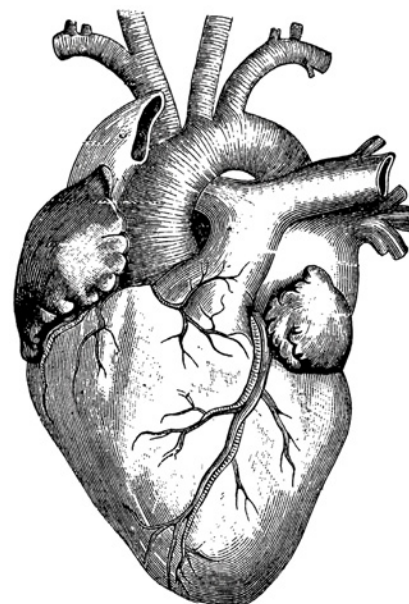
imagers in creating new value-based reimbursement methods; the need for intersociety and interspecialty collaboration addressing radiation dose; and the tremendous opportunity afforded by comparative-effectiveness research.

## Learning Plus

While the annual conference provided an excellent opportunity to learn about cardiac imaging and the impact of health-care reform, those seeking year-round resources can turn to the recently expanded curricula developed by the NASCI Committee on Education. The committee's cardiovascular imaging curricula were written to define what an imaging resident or fellow should know at completion of his or her training. Future development will include providing basic guidelines that are then broken down into specific topics allotted to a certain year or level of training. For example, an anatomy curriculum might list the chambers of the heart, the valves, and the vessels that an individual should know by the end of their first year of residency.

Some curricula, however, can “turn into a laundry list of diseases and pathophysiologies that you should know,” explains Shawn D. Teague, M.D., chair of the Committee on Education and associate professor of clinical radiology and imaging sciences at Indiana University School of Medicine, in Indianapolis. In other words, they don't provide any additional information.

Additionally, few residency programs have caseloads that cover all of the topics outlined in NASCI's curricula. Therefore, residents are forced to seek other ways to learn these subjects, and they may not know where to start. “For example, in our [residency] program, we don't necessarily have a lot of congenital heart cases in pediatrics, so trainees don't get that exposure,” Teague says.



Fortunately, to help residents and fellows become familiar with topics not found in their own programs, the committee added a set of references to their curricula that link to such online resources as journal publications, lectures, animations, and videos. “As far as I know, at least in the radiology world, this has not been done before,” Teague says, adding that residents are now given a starting place for finding supporting material on a topic.

Residents are not the only ones who stand to benefit from the curricula's new resources, Teague says, though they may be the largest group to utilize them. Cardiothoracic fellows, practicing radiologists, and those seeking additional certification in cardiac CT can also draw value from them during additional training. “Cardiac radiology is still relatively new,” Teague says. “We have a lot of people who are out in practice and learning cardiac as they go.”

For more resources from NASCI, and to access presentations from the conference, visit [www.nasci.org](http://www.nasci.org). //