

## **Clinical audit in nuclear medicine: The Finnish approach in respect of European guidelines**

Hannu Järvinen, Principal Advisor (for radiation in health care) Radiation Practices Regulation, Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority, Helsinki Finland

According to the EC directive 97/43/EURATOM the EU Member States are required to implement clinical audits for medical radiological practices in accordance with national procedures. In 2009, the EC issued specific guidance (Radiation Protection No 159) for the implementation of this requirement. In Finland, requirements for self-assessments and external clinical audit of all radiological practices have been set in the legislation, and a National Advisory Committee on Clinical Audit (NACA), set by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, has coordinated the activities since 2004. In this presentation, the development of clinical audits for NM activities in Finland is reviewed, with a reference to the EC recommendation.

The activities of the NACA have created the basis of high quality and consistent clinical audits. The NACA is a multi-disciplinary group of clinical experts, independent of any auditing organizations. Its tasks include, among other things, evaluating the suitability and coverage of the criteria used in clinical audits and collecting summaries and reviews of the results. The NACA has issued several recommendations starting from the competence, experience and independence of the auditors, then giving advice e.g. on how to avoid overlap of clinical audits with the accreditations of nuclear medicine units, how to avoid overlap with regulatory inspections, and how to take into consideration the European guideline (RP 159). Current other activities include guidance on how to carry out self-assessments and internal audits, how to develop the criteria of good practice, guidance on the priorities for the third audit round, and a review of the outcome of the audits by a specific questionnaire to the audited health care units (to be completed in 2012).

By 2012, all departments of Nuclear Medicine have at least twice been externally audited by special auditing organizations (currently two organizations provide these services). The results of the first complete audit round revealed a number of shortcomings of the local NM practices such as the lack of medical physics services, shortcomings of the referral practice and examination guidance, insufficient evaluation of the results of examinations and insufficient recording of radiation protection training. An important supplementary benefit of the clinical audits has been that it improves communication within the department and speeds-up the development of appropriate quality systems.

The future development of the clinical audits in the NM sector aims at more detailed in-depth assessments for selected NM examinations or treatments. The criteria of good practices for individual examinations are usually based on the recommendations of the EANM or SNM (USA); these recommendations are discussed by a group of experts and accepted or modified to establish preliminary criteria of good practice. The round of clinical audits against these criteria is then implemented to compare the local practices and provide conclusions on the appropriateness of the criteria. In this way, clinical audit is used as a benchmarking tool to develop the criteria.

Further information on Finnish experiences and the development of clinical audits (mainly in Finnish) is available from the NACA website [www.clinicalaudit.net](http://www.clinicalaudit.net).