Radiology's 100th Anniversary

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Recognition Comes From the White House, Congress

Radiology last month commemorated the 100th anniversary of Wilhelm Conrad Roentgen's discovery of the x-ray and the development of radiology in the last century. More than 1,200 persons attended the Radiology Centennial, Inc. (RCI) convocation held in Washington, DC during the annual meeting of the American Roentgen Ray Society (ARRS). The celebrated event drew recognition from the White House, Capitol Hill, organized medicine and industry.

The convocation ceremony opened with music played by the United States Marine Corp Band, followed by a processional of the official RCI party and then the arrival of the Joint Armed Forces Color Guard.

In his opening remarks, John P. Tampas of Burlington, VT, president of RCI, read a letter from the White House, signed by President Clinton, which welcomed all who gathered in Washington, DC to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the discovery of x-rays. "In the century since German scientist Wilhelm Conrad Roentgen first made his legendary discovery, radiology has grown to become one of the most important fields of medicine," the President's letter said. (Text of letter).

Additionally, noted Dr. Tampas, the April 5, 1995 Congressional Record, had a brief statement by Rep. Fortney "Pete" Stark (CA), ranking Democrat on the House Ways and Means Committee, entitled "Radiology: 100 Years of Health Progress" (See page 7 for text of the statement). In that statement, Rep. Stark said: "In a hundred years, radiology has become a vital part of our health care pattern." And, it continued: "I ask that the record show that this House joins other Americans in recognizing the value of radiology to all of us in this, its 100th year."

Dr. Tampas pointed out that the celebration of the centennial year of the discovery of the x-ray has involved hundreds of people working on RCI committees and projects and thousands of others who have used them. "It has been my honor to serve as president of radiology centennial," Dr. Tampas said. "This has been a tremendous cooperative effort involving all of our sponsoring societies, our sponsoring companies, centennial staff and many, many others who have advised us and contributed to our efforts in money and time," he said. "We are indebted to everyone of you."

Helen C. Redman of Dallas, TX, first vice president of the RCI Executive Committee, gave a brief description of centennial activities planned throughout 1995. Seven years ago when the centennial was being organized, it was decided that the celebration should be a public event. One component is to have a celebration within the family of radiology. More than 40 sponsoring societies as well as state and local radiological societies, affiliated groups in physics, technology and management and industrial colleagues plan to feature centennial activities this year.
To encourage RCI’s national sponsoring societies to plan centennial presentations, the RCI Honors and Awards Committee designed the Centennial Hartman Medal to honor the memory of Glen Hartman, who first had the idea of the centennial celebration.

To tell the story of the first 100 years of progress, RCI developed a media campaign headed by Anne G. Osborn of Salt Lake City, UT. RCI has produced a 27-minute videotape for general audiences as well as for hospital waiting rooms. Some projects are intended for multiple uses. RCI also has produced 16 slide sets and more than 2,000 sets have been purchased to date. These slides can be used for radiology meetings as well as for civic clubs or hospital auxiliaries.

RCI has developed three different levels of exhibits. Two were on display at the ARRS meeting. The largest exhibit is scheduled for science museums throughout the year. Four of the mid-sized exhibits are scheduled for more than 50 radiological meetings around the country. Then there are the poster shows which can be used in offices, hospitals or communities.

A three-volume history of radiology will be published later this year. During the year, radiological journals and other publications plan to publish articles on the history of radiology.

Another RCI project is the development of a permanent record of radiology using a time capsule developed with 3-M Medical Imaging Systems. The time capsule will be closed during a ceremony at the annual meeting of the Radiological Society of North America in November. Suggestions are being requested for what the time capsule should contain.

This year and for years to come, millions of high school and middle school students will learn about radiation science and its medical applications when their teachers use the RCI curriculum enhancement package that will be available this summer (See story on page 9).

While RCI is an American celebration of radiology, RCI materials are also being used by colleagues in more than 30 countries for their celebrations. The World Health Organization is publishing a special issue of its bimonthly magazine on a century of radiology.

RCI also has developed a postal meter stamp. Since much mail is metered, this is an important effort. And lastly, Dr. Redman recognized the fundraising efforts for RCI activities.

RCI President Tampas pointed out that RCI sponsors include physicists, radiologic technologists, dosimetrists, nurses, managers, credentialing bodies, public health agencies and the Interamerican College of Radiology. "This has truly been a family affair," he said.

Industry has also had a significant role in the planning of the centennial. William Angus of Philips Medical Systems, a physician and a member of the RCI Industry Committee, referred to two industry sponsors who have in their archives letters from Professor Roentgen complaining bitterly about prices, product quality and deliveries "so that hasn't changed in 100 years," Dr. Angus said. Some of the companies represented in the centennial supplied the tubes, transformers and plates with which the first American radiographs were made. The list of other participating members came on board as radiology grew and absorbed new science and technology. "My colleagues, the 76 sponsoring companies and I are very pleased to be part of this convocation and the larger centennial effort," Angus said. They have been a part of the entire effort -
planning, fundraising, committee projects and marketing to the community at large. "We will be with you as we go into our second century," he added.

A slide presentation highlighting the first 100 years of radiology, produced by Eastman Kodak Co., was also shown.

RCI President Tampas noted that in the early days of radiology, some of the pioneering efforts carried out were not by physicians, but by electricians, engineers and photographers. "Clearly, Roentgen himself had no concept of the impact his discovery would have on the practice of medicine. Yet it was obvious to many when the bones of his hands were first seen on that florescent screen on November 8, 1895, that medical radiology was born," Dr. Tampas said. "Despite much of the public furor and rumors that surrounded the announcement of Roentgen's discovery, it soon became apparent that its greatest potential would be in x-ray imaging and radiation treatment," he said. The first clinical x-ray in the U.S. was performed at Dartmouth in the physics lab. It was Walter Dodd, a photographer and alchemist, who made the first x-ray exposure in a U.S. hospital. Dodd like many of the early pioneers in radiology realized soon that to have this technology developed into a medical art and specialty that a medical degree was necessary. He and many of his colleagues, many of whom became martyrs to radiology, established that radiology was a physician service. One testimony to the success of the growth of radiology in the past 100 years as a specialty are the representatives of other medical disciplines who are also celebrating radiology's centennial.

Even more significant as the family of radiology gathered to celebrate the centennial is the recognition by the American Medical Association of the role that radiology has in the health and well-being of America. Daniel "Stormy" Johnson, a practicing diagnostic radiologist in New Orleans, LA and speaker of the AMA House of Delegates, said "I am extremely proud and excited to be a part of this celebration." He noted that much work has been done to acknowledge the contribution that the discovery of x-rays 100 years ago has made to the well-being of patients around the world. Dr. Johnson pointed out four major developments in the use of x-ray: the discovery of x-rays, the development of the automatic processor, the development of imaging intensification and the development of CT scan. "Three out of four of those have come into practical application since I was a second-year medical student," he said. "Today I earn my living using imaging modalities that had not been invented when I completed my board examinations."

Dr. Johnson has spent his volunteer time in organized medicine in broader organizations and has been a facilitator at the state and then the national level for 19 years. He has watched those from other disciplines and radiologic organizations come together to discuss and debate significant issues of the day. He remarked that radiology has the highest number of representatives who have ever participated in the AMA House of Delegates.

In closing, Dr. Tampas recognized and thanked the four major radiological societies that provided the infrastructure to carry out the RCI efforts. The societies are the American College of Radiology (ACR), the American Roentgen Ray Society (ARRS), the American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology (ASTRO) and the Radiological Society of North America (RSNA).