

The regulatory background of nuclear cardiology in Europe: a survey by the European Council of Nuclear Cardiology

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Purpose Nuclear cardiology is a well-validated, non-invasive imaging modality that is highly cost-effective as a diagnostic and prognostic tool in the evaluation of patients with known or suspected coronary artery disease. However, the number of procedures in Europe is very far from that which would be expected on the basis of epidemiological data, particularly when comparison is made with the USA. As a preliminary step for future action aimed at improving and increasing nuclear cardiology practice in Europe, the European Council of Nuclear Cardiology performed a survey to identify the regulatory issues and the training components pertaining to the practice of nuclear cardiology. **Methods** a questionnaire was sent to 31 national nuclear medicine societies and to 40 national cardiology societies. The main areas covered by the survey were: (1) the license requirements, (2) the theoretical and practical aspects of training and (3) supervision of the stress test during a nuclear cardiology study. **Results** The results show that, in a setting of wide heterogeneity of national regulations, education and professional practice, nuclear medicine is a restricted and closely regulated specialty. This situation guarantees the quality and safe use of radionuclides; at the same time, however, it limits integration of nuclear medicine into the clinical arena. **Conclusion** Cardiologists should become more involved in nuclear cardiology, to further stimulate the use of this powerful diagnostic and prognostic imaging modality.

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