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## Nuclear energy, nuclear technologies, and radiological protection — Vocabulary —

### Part 6: Nuclear medicine

*Énergie nucléaire, technologies nucléaires et protection  
radiologique — Vocabulaire —*

*Partie 6: Médecine nucléaire*

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## Foreword

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This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 85, *Nuclear energy, nuclear technologies, and radiological protection*.

A list of all parts in the ISO 12749 series can be found on the ISO website.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at [www.iso.org/members.html](http://www.iso.org/members.html).

## Introduction

This document provides terms and definitions for nuclear medicine, the medical discipline whereby radioisotopes as unsealed sources are administered to patients, in order to carry out diagnostic exams, therapeutic treatments for various pathologies and to monitor the evolution of the disease.

This multidisciplinary activity is fundamentally made up of medical, radiopharmaceutical and medical physics components, although it also relies on nuclear science, biology, biochemistry, radiochemistry, nuclear chemistry, electronics, electro-mechanics, computing, metrology of ionizing radiation and dosimetry. It involves tasks relating to support, research and development as well as staff training, which are all carried out intensively in this field.

The specific areas of most relevance to nuclear medicine are oncology, cardiology, endocrinology and neurology. However, its reaches practically every medical specialty.

The professional and technical staff who work in nuclear medicine are highly specialized, carrying out their activities in highly complex facilities, using a large range of equipment, within a strict healthcare and radiological regulatory setting.

These activities produce a large amount of documentation such as reports, publications, legal documents and teaching texts, all of which require the use of precise, coherent and unambiguous terms and definitions. Therefore, it becomes essential to harmonize the terminology used by all of the above-mentioned sectors and professions.

Conceptual arrangement of terms and definitions is based on concepts systems that show corresponding relationships among nuclear medicine concepts. Such arrangement provides users with a structured view of the nuclear medicine sector and will facilitate common understanding of all related concepts, see also [Annex A](#). Besides, concept systems and conceptual arrangement of terminological data will be helpful to any kind of user because it will promote clear, accurate and useful communication.

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# Nuclear energy, nuclear technologies, and radiological protection — Vocabulary —

## Part 6: Nuclear medicine

### 1 Scope

This document contains the terms, definitions, notes to entry and examples corresponding to the frequently used concepts which apply to diagnostic and therapeutic nuclear medicine.

It comprises the minimum essential information for each nuclear medicine concept represented by a single term. It provides the reader with the information required to approach this multidisciplinary speciality, such as medical, radiopharmacy and medical physics point of view. It is intended to facilitate communication and promote common understanding.

### 2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

### 3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

#### 3.1 Basic terms related to nuclear medicine

##### 3.1.1

##### **nuclear medicine**

field of medicine in which unsealed radioactive sources, namely *radiopharmaceuticals* (3.4.3), are used for diagnosis or therapy

##### 3.1.1.1

##### **diagnostic nuclear medicine**

scientific and clinical discipline in which radiopharmaceuticals, administered by different routes, are used for diagnostic purposes

Note 1 to entry: Diagnostic nuclear medicine is mainly carried out through imaging but may also be measurements of the global or regional function of an organ.

Note 2 to entry: Diagnostic nuclear medicine also includes quantitative imaging and patient monitoring for the follow-up of both the disease progression and the treatment response.

##### 3.1.1.2

##### **therapeutic nuclear medicine**

scientific and clinical discipline in which radiopharmaceuticals are administered for therapeutic purposes

### 3.1.2

#### **theragnostics**

theranostics

treatment strategy based on personalized medicine, that allows selecting the most appropriate therapy according to the diagnostic images

Note 1 to entry: In nuclear medicine, the specific targeted diagnostic test and therapy can be made sequentially with the same radiolabelled molecule (i.e. radiopharmaceutical) or with the same molecule and different label radionuclides or with different molecules with similar physiological properties.

EXAMPLE Personalized treatment of a patient with a positive somatostatin receptor image (neuroendocrine tumor) by a radiopharmaceutical composed of somatostatin analogs peptide labelled with an emitter suitable for molecular radiotherapy.

### 3.1.3

#### **radiopharmacy**

branch of pharmacy, which deals with the preparation, characterization and quality of radioactive drugs in nuclear medicine procedures

EXAMPLE The final stage or the preparation of the pharmaceutical and/or activity dispensing is carried out from commercial products in a hospital radiopharmacy or in centralized radiopharmacies and then delivered to a hospital radiopharmacy.

### 3.1.4

#### **administered activity**

activity (in Bq) of radiopharmaceutical that has been dispensed to the patient for diagnostic or therapeutic purposes

Note 1 to entry: The activity of radiopharmaceuticals is measured in megabecquerels.

### 3.1.5

#### **uptake**

accumulation of administered activity to a particular organ or tissue at a particular time after administration

[SOURCE: NATIONAL COUNCIL ON RADIATION PROTECTION AND MEASUREMENTS. NCRP Composite Glossary. NCRP, Bethesda, 2011]

## 3.2 Terms related to diagnostic nuclear medicine

### 3.2.1

#### **diagnostic nuclear medicine**

(See [3.1.1.1](#))

### 3.2.2

#### **nuclear medicine imaging**

imaging performed after administration of a radiopharmaceutical

Note 1 to entry: Imaging is considered a non-invasive diagnostic technique, as opposed to a biopsy or exploratory surgery.

Note 2 to entry: PET and SPECT are the main type of nuclear medicine imaging providing information about how certain tissues and organs are functioning. It is complementary to anatomical imaging, such as X-ray imaging.

### 3.2.3

#### **molecular imaging**

MI

imaging allowing the visualization, characterization, and measurement of biological processes at the molecular and cellular levels in humans and other living systems

Note 1 to entry: *Nuclear medicine imaging* ([3.2.2](#)) is one of the modalities of molecular imaging.



[SOURCE: Mankoff DA. A definition of molecular imaging. J. Nucl. Med. 2007 Jun;48(6):18N, 21N, modified.]

### 3.2.4

#### **quantitative imaging**

extraction and use of numerical/statistical features from medical images

Note 1 to entry: The chief method used in quantitative imaging is to delineate a region of interest on the image and determine the mean uptake in this region, but many other features can be extracted.

[SOURCE: Abramson RG, Burton KR, Yu JP, et al. Methods and challenges in quantitative imaging biomarker development. Academic Radiology 2015 Jan, 22(1):25-32].

### 3.2.5

#### **diagnostic reference level**

DRL

level used in medical imaging to indicate whether, in routine conditions, the activity of a radiopharmaceutical administered in a specified radiological procedure is unusually high or unusually low for that procedure

Note 1 to entry: In diagnostic nuclear medicine, DRL is a level of activity for typical examinations for groups of standardized patients.

[SOURCE: IAEA SAFETY STANDARDS SERIES No. GSR Part 3 (2014), modified.]

### 3.2.6

#### **standard uptake value**

SUV

value equal to the ratio of the image derived radioactivity concentration (in kBq/ml) to the whole body concentration (in kBq/kg)

Note 1 to entry: Mainly used in PET imaging, but also in SPECT imaging.

Note 2 to entry: There are other definitions of the SUV when substituting the body weight with the lean body weight or the body surface area. In addition, from a region of interest, several SUV values can be extracted (such as the maximum, the mean SUV-value, etc.).

## 3.3 Terms related to therapeutic nuclear medicine

### 3.3.1

#### **therapeutic nuclear medicine**

(See [3.1.1.2](#))

### 3.3.2

#### **radiotherapy**

radiation therapy

therapy that uses ionizing radiation to kill cells and shrink pathological tissues

Note 1 to entry: Radiation may be delivered by a machine outside the body (external-beam radiation therapy), or it may come from radioactive material placed in the body near cancer cells (brachytherapy) or from radiopharmaceutical administered to the patient (molecular radiotherapy).

### 3.3.3

#### **molecular radiotherapy**

radiation therapy that uses a radiopharmaceutical to kill pathological cells and tissues by the effect of ionizing radiation

### 3.3.3.1

#### **metabolic radiotherapy**

molecular radiotherapy using selective irradiation of a target zone by a radiopharmaceutical participating in the metabolism of tumor cells administered to the patient

**EXAMPLE** The most widely used form of molecular radiotherapy is for the treatment of thyroid pathologies (thyroid cancer and hyperthyroidism). Called radioiodine therapy, this treatment consists of an oral administration of iodine-131, which will primarily concentrate in the thyroid to kill diseased cells.

### 3.3.3.2

#### **radioimmunotherapy**

RIT

molecular radiotherapy based on a personalized cancer treatment that combines radiation therapy with the precise targeting ability of immunotherapy, a treatment that mimics cellular activity in the body's immune system

Note 1 to entry: In immunotherapy, scientists create monoclonal antibodies in a laboratory that are designed to recognize and bind to the antigen of a specific cancer cell.

Note 2 to entry: In RIT, the monoclonal antibody is paired with a radioactive material. When injected into the patient's bloodstream, the antibody travels to and binds to the cancer cells, allowing a high dose of radiation to be delivered to the tumor.

Note 3 to entry: The antibodies are designed to attach only very specific types of cells, consequently, radioimmunotherapy maximizes the radiation that can be delivered to the diseased tissue and minimizes the amount of radiation to which healthy tissue is exposed.

[SOURCE: Glossary of Molecular Imaging Terms, web SNMMI, 2017, modified.]

### 3.3.3.3

#### **peptide receptor radionuclide therapy**

molecular radiotherapy which is targeted towards peptide receptors

Note 1 to entry: The peptide receptor radionuclide therapy is used in the treatment of neuroendocrine tumors which overexpress these receptors.

### 3.3.4

#### **selective internal radiotherapy**

SIRT

radioembolization

cancer treatment that uses radioactive glass or resin beads, called microspheres, that are injected in the tumour blood supply

Note 1 to entry: The selective internal radiation therapy is mainly used for treatment of liver tumors.

## 3.4 Terms related to radiopharmacy

### 3.4.1

#### **radiopharmacy**

(See [3.1.2](#))

### 3.4.2

#### **tracer**

chemical compound used to trace the course of a biological process

#### 3.4.2.1

##### **radiotracer**

tracer labelled by a radionuclide