



HOPE LUNCHEON 2003

The **HOPE** Study held its second annual Participant Appreciation Luncheon on September 30, 2003 at the Boston University Medical Campus. The event was a huge success, with approximately 150 participants in attendance. The Luncheon was organized with the purpose of recognizing participants for their valued involvement in the study, and of educating them about the latest research in Alzheimer's disease.

According to Eric Steinberg, HOPE Study project manager, "the event was a wonderful way for the BU ADC to show our appreciation for participants' contribution in the fight against Alzheimer's disease." The day's educational portion began with introductions from Mr. Steinberg,

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MASSACHUSETTS MEMORY WALK RAISES OVER \$750,000 IN FIGHT AGAINST AD

The BUADC was proud to participate in last Fall's annual Memory Walk fundraiser for the Alzheimer's Association. The various Massachusetts state walks included over 5,000 participants and raised over \$750,000 that will help support research and services in the fight against AD. The BUADC team was among the top three leading fundraisers in the state among corporate and university organizations, generating over \$8,500 in support. Melissa Barrup and Nancy Tran captained the BU ADC team, which consisted of nearly 40 walkers who completed the 3-mile walk along the Charles River. For more information about the Memory Walk and our state chapter of the Alzheimer's Association, see www.alzmass.org.

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The BU ADC team poses in front of the Charles River at last fall's Boston Area Memory Walk.

HOPE LUNCHEON 2003

ADC Director Dr. Neil Kowall, BU ADC Associate Director Dr. Robert C. Green, and Michael Kincade (Alzheimer's Association Multicultural Outreach Coordinator, Massachusetts Chapter).

The program continued with a series of brief presentations from a panel of researchers associated with the HOPE Study. Dr. Kowall discussed an overview of Alzheimer's disease, as well as methods of prevention and the latest medications. Dr. Green presented the most recent genetic research performed in the field of Alzheimer's disease. Dr. Ann McKee, the BU ADC Neuropathology Core Director, elaborated on the importance of brain tissue donation. She was followed by Mr. Robert Stuart Vail, a HOPE Study participant, who spoke movingly about his decision to become a brain tissue donor. Dr. Charles Drebing talked about the significance and implications of being in the caregiving role for a loved one afflicted with Alzheimer's disease. The morning ended with a lively panel discussion, during which members of the audience asked numerous questions.

Afterwards, a buffet lunch was provided and three

raffles were held, with prizes including gift certificates to Barnes and Noble, Loews Movie Theater, and Stop-and-Shop. Certificates of Distinction were awarded to all participants who have been with the HOPE Study for four or more years.

Among many comments received about the Luncheon, one participant found that the program gave him "a sense of belonging to a worthwhile cause." Another noted that the "panel was especially informative about Alzheimer's and the progress being made in prevention and diagnosis." Thank you to all those who attended, and we look forward to seeing you again soon! ■



Dr. Ann McKee, BU ADC Neuropathology Core Director, was a featured speaker at last fall's HOPE luncheon.

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

JANUARY 30-31. Community Partnering for Dementia Research.

Workshop for community leaders and academic researchers interested in partnering to develop projects that meet community needs pertaining to dementia. Northeastern University Curry Student Center, 360 Huntington Ave., Boston. Contact Rose Harvey at 781-687-2904 for more details

MARCH 6th. Conference for Caregivers of Older Adults.

McCloud Suite, Curry Student Center, Northeastern University, 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. For information and to pre-register contact: Diane Sheehan of Northeastern University at (617) 373-3109, or di.Sheehan@neu.edu

MARCH 23-24. Enhancing Quality of Life in the Person with Alzheimer's Disease.

March 23 evening lecture by noted geriatric care provider Dr. William Thomas; March 24 workshop for professional caregivers. National Heritage Museum, Lexington. Contact Linda Danner at 781-687-3167 for more details.

FRIDAY, APRIL 2nd: 3rd Annual African American Community Caregiver Forum.

8:30 am -3:00 pm, Russell Auditorium at 80 Talbot Ave, Dorchester. Free continental breakfast and served lunch. This Year's Theme: "We Are Family." RSVP to Michael Kincade, 617-868-6718, ext. 200.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 5th: Alzheimer's Association "Map Through the Maze" Research Conference for Professionals.

Marlboro, MA. See www.alzmass.org for more details.

JUNE 7 & 8: 3rd Annual SUPER IDEAR III summer program for dementia researchers.

National Heritage Museum, Lexington. Contact Rose Harvey at 781-687-2904 for more details.

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER. 3rd Annual HOPE Participant Appreciation Luncheon.

To be held at Boston University Medical Campus. Date and time TBA.

RESEARCH UPDATE: *Active studies seeking participants*

RESEARCH AREA	Study Title	Study Description
MEMORY & COGNITION	HOPE: Health Outreach Program for the Elderly (ADC Research Registry)	A longitudinal study that involves the evaluation of older adults with and without memory problems. The goal is to increase the understanding of age related changes in memory and thinking abilities.
	Healthy Aging and Memory	A simulated AD prevention trial that examines new and less costly methods for evaluating memory and functional abilities.
	BEST: Brain Enhancement Strengthening Treatment	A study to examine a cognitive and memory enhancement program that has been used successfully with other patients with brain injuries and Alzheimer's disease.
	Linking Technology and Preserved Memories for Dementia	This study evaluates the effectiveness of family made audiotapes, compared to staff-made tapes, to improve the well being of persons with memory loss.
	Vision and Cognition in Alzheimer's Disease	Persons with Alzheimer's disease may have multiple visual impairments that affect cognition. In this study participants with Alzheimer's disease and healthy elderly participants will be given various vision and cognition tests.
CAREGIVING SUPPORT AND EDUCATION	CARE: The Alzheimer's Disease Caregiver Training Program	A study testing whether a new 5-week caregiver-based training program can help reduce problem behaviors among patients with Alzheimer's disease and reduce caregiver distress.
	BATH: Decreasing Resistiveness to Bathing in Persons with Alzheimer's Disease	A study to learn ways to improve the bathing experience of people with memory problems and their caregivers. Nurses will visit patients in the home for teaching and observation.
	TIPS: Treatment and Illness Perceptions Survey	A telephone survey to examine people's beliefs, knowledge and experiences regarding Alzheimer's disease and its health care options.
	ESP: Early-Stage Program	This study examines the impact of an Alzheimer's Association education and support program for people with early-stage AD and their care partners.
GENETICS STUDIES	MIRAGE: Multi-Institutional Research in Alzheimer's Genetic Epidemiology	This study evaluates the association between genetic (hereditary) and non-genetic risk factors and Alzheimer's disease. The study is being conducted at multiple sites in the U.S., Canada and Germany.
	REVEAL: Risk Evaluation & Education for Alzheimer's Disease	This clinical trial examines a genetic risk assessment program for adult children and siblings of people with Alzheimer's disease.
TREATMENT STUDIES	CLASP-AD: Cholesterol Lowering Agent to Slow the Progression of Alzheimer's Disease.	Tests the usefulness of simvastatin, a cholesterol-lowering drug, as a treatment to slow the progression of Alzheimer's disease.
	Homocysteine and AD	A nationwide study examining the effects of nutritional supplements to lower homocysteine levels and slow the rate of cognitive decline in Alzheimer's disease.
	TAP/DAP: Treatment of Agitation & Psychosis in Dementia & Parkinsonism	A study to determine the best medicine to treat psychosis and agitation in patients who have both dementia and parkinsonism.
	ALADDIN: Antigonadatropin Leuprolide in Alzheimer's Disease Drug INvestigation	A study to evaluate the effectiveness of leuprolide, an FDA-approved drug for treating hormone related conditions, in improving cognitive function and slowing the progression of Alzheimer's disease.
PREVENTION STUDIES	ADAPT: Alzheimer's Disease Anti-inflammatory Prevention Trial	An Alzheimer's disease prevention study. The study is testing whether non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs, e.g., naprosyn) can prevent or delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease.

If you are interested in more information about any of these research studies, please call Catherine Pfau at (888) 458- BUAD or email at pfau@bu.edu

HONORARY AND MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The Alzheimer's Disease Center welcomes honorary and memorial contributions. These gifts are an excellent way to pay tribute to a family member or a friend while making a contribution to the advancement of research in the field of AD.

We are pleased to include this new section in our newsletter that acknowledges these gifts.

In Memory of Josephine Lewis

Edward and Eileen Crickard
Cathleen F. Frizzell and Robbin Ojala
Jim and Peg Hickey
Lisa Lewis
Catherine Sears
Marie Sweeney

In Memory of Melvin R. Mullins, Sr.

Roberta Jackson
Mrs. Winifred Keith
Eldridge Jackson
Prudence Carter

Your contributions are gratefully accepted and are used to further research in the area of Alzheimer's disease. Please make checks payable to Alzheimer's Disease Center.

Forward to:

Boston University School of Medicine,
Alzheimer's Disease Center,
715 Albany Street,
Robinson Suite 7800,
Boston, MA 02118

Call 1-888-458-BUAD for more information.

NEW STUDIES:

THE LOAD (LATE-ONSET ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE) STUDY

The National Institutes of Health is sponsoring an important new research project to help identify genetic factors that contribute to late onset Alzheimer's disease. The BUADC is one of ten sites nationwide that are carrying out this study, called **The Genetics of Late Onset Alzheimer Disease**, or LOAD for short. The focus of this new study is to identify, evaluate, study and follow families who have multiple members with late onset AD. AD is considered late-onset if its signs and symptoms develop by age 60 or later.

"Discovery of risk factor genes is essential for understanding the causes of late onset Alzheimer's disease and for developing effective treatments and prevention strategies," said Dr. Robert Green, BU Site Director for the project. "Families who have been affected by this devastating disease understand the urgency of finding the causes of AD, and how to stop it. Our hope is that through the efforts of such families, we will one day unravel the mystery of this disease. I believe we are moving solidly toward this goal by learning more about AD every day."

Families having **two or more members with late onset Alzheimer's disease or serious memory loss** are encouraged to consider participating in this study. As part of their participation, individuals may be asked to provide

family information, to complete brief survey forms, to undergo medical examination, and to donate blood. All of this information will be crucial in helping to better understand genetic and other factors that affect an individual's risk of developing AD. To find out more about the LOAD Study at the BU ADC, please contact Patrick Compton at 617-414-1196 or toll free at 1-888-458-2823. ■



*Patrick Compton, BU LOAD Study coordinator,
in the ADC's blood processing laboratory.*

SPOTLIGHT:

A NEW DRUG APPROVED TO FIGHT ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Alzheimer's disease (AD) has thus far benefited from only a limited number of treatment options for improving symptoms and slowing the progression of the disease. However, in October the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the sale in the U.S. of the first of a new class of drugs for AD. The drug is memantine HCL, and is approved for the treatment of patients with moderate to severe AD. The drug, which was developed by German-based Merz Pharmaceuticals (and has been used in Germany for treatment of dementia for over 10 years), will be marketed and distributed in this country by Forest Laboratories, Inc. of New York under the trade name Namenda™ (for more information, see www.namenda.com or call 1-877-262-6363). It is expected to be available early this year.

How does memantine compare with current treatments for AD?

Current treatments for AD are known as cholinesterase inhibitors. These include medications such as donepezil (Aricept®), rivastigmine (Exelon®), and galantamine (Reminyl®). This class of medications works by inhibiting the enzyme that breaks down the neurotransmitter (or “chemical messenger”) acetylcholine, thus enabling more of this neurotransmitter to reach the brain cells, resulting in better cell-to-cell communication and subsequent improvements in a variety of cognitive functions. Cholinesterase inhibitors are currently prescribed for patients in the mild-to-moderate stages of AD.

Memantine has a completely different mechanism of¹ action than the cholinesterase inhibitors described above. Memantine is a NMDA (N-methyl-D-aspartate) receptor antagonist. This means that memantine, in effect, blocks the brain cell receptors from the neurotransmitter glutamate. Researchers believe that AD patients have excessive amounts of glutamate, leading to further progression

of the disease. Memantine is currently the only approved treatment for patients in the moderate-to-severe stages of AD.

Recent studies have also shown that patients may receive further benefits when memantine is added to cholinesterase therapy.¹⁻² Both classes of drugs are meant to improve symptoms at various stages of the disease, but neither actually halts the progression by affecting the underlying hallmarks of the disease: the amyloid plaques and neurofibrillary tangles.

Clinical studies of memantine

The FDA approval of memantine is based upon three studies, two conducted in the U.S. and one conducted in Europe. A recent study, published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in April 2003, found that after six months of treatment with memantine patients experienced a significant improvement in cognition and activities of daily living. The amount of care needed for these patients also declined. Another study, published earlier in 2003 in *Neurology*, found that patients taking both memantine and donepezil performed better on cognitive measures than patients taking donepezil alone.

Overall the drug slows the loss of the ability to perform daily functions such as washing, dressing, toileting, and feeding. Memantine is well-tolerated by patients and side effects have been minimal and minor. The most frequent reported adverse events observed in the clinical trials include dizziness, headache, constipation, and confusion. ■

References

- 1 Reisberg B, Doody R, Stoffler A, et al. Memantine in moderate-to-severe Alzheimer's disease. *N Engl J Med*. 2003;348:1333-1341. Abstract.
- 2 Farlow MR, Tariot P, Grossberg GT, Gergel I, Graham S, Jin J. Memantine/donepezil dual therapy is superior to placebo-donepezil therapy for treatment of moderate to severe Alzheimer's disease. *Neurology*, 2003;60A412. Abstract.

RESEARCH CENTER INFORMATION

If you have general questions about the ADC, or specific questions or comments about this newsletter, please contact:

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CLINIC INFORMATION

For diagnostic evaluation, management and treatment of memory-related problems, please contact either of the following BU ADC-affiliated memory assessment clinics:

Boston location:

Geriatric Memory Assessment Clinic
Boston Medical Center
850 Harrison Avenue
Boston, MA 02118

Appointments: **(617) 414-4639**

South Shore location:

Memory Assessment Clinic
Boston University Neurology Associates
1221 Main Street, Suite 401
Weymouth, MA 02190

Appointments: **(781) 331-9944**



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