POLICY & PRACTICE

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Bioequivalence for Epilepsy Drugs

As part of the 2010 FDA appropriations law, Food and Drug Administration officials have until Sept. 30, 2010, to determine whether to change the way antiepileptic drugs are tested for bioequivalence. The agency also must report on adverse events and seizures associated with brand and generic antiepileptic drugs. Earlier this year, the Epilepsy Foundation released survey results showing that patients risked worsening seizures and other side effects when they switched their antiepileptic medications brand to generic, generic to brand, or generic to generic.

Telestroke Network Launched

North Carolina stroke patients now have access to expert physicians through a new telestroke network launched by the Comprehensive Stroke Center at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem. The program, which began late last year, uses a telemedicine robotic system to link rural emergency department physicians with five neurologists who are available around the clock. All of the neurologists who participate in the program have either completed fellowship training in the care of stroke patients or are board-certified in vascular neurology, according to Wake Forest University. "The Telestroke network is a real step forward in providing the latest in stroke care and expertise to all patients in North Carolina," Dr. Charles Tegeler, director of the Comprehensive Stroke Center at Wake Forest, said in a statement.

ALS Service Connection Finalized

Officials at the Department of Veterans Affairs officially established a presumption of service connection for any veteran who develops amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) at any time after serving in the military. The policy change will make it easier for veterans with ALS to access benefits and medical care. The VA published a final rule on Nov. 4, which went into effect on that date and applies to all applications for benefits received by the VA on or after Sept. 23, 2008. In order to qualify for service connection, veterans must have 90 days or more of continuous active service in the military. VA officials based their decision to establish a service presumption for ALS on a November 2006 report from the Institute of Medicine that concluded that "there is limited and suggestive evidence of an association between military service and later development of ALS."

New AAN Subspecialty Forums

The American Academy of Neurology is expanding its portfolio by providing new forums for neurologists interested in hospital-based neurology care and sports neurology. The new section on neurohospitalists will focus on improving inpatient neurology care and developing future educational programs. It's also an opportunity for neurohospitalists, those hospital-based neurologists who spend at least a quarter of their time caring for inpatients, to network. "The demand for timely neurological evaluation and intervention has dramatically increased over time. In addition, financial pressures … have made it difficult for many neurologists to maintain both an inpatient and outpatient practice," Dr. David J. Likosky, the neurohospitalist section chair, said in a statement. In the Sports Neurology section, members can stay current on evolving sports neurology topics and promote the field of sports neurology, according to the AAN.

MDA Honors Top Neurologist

Dr. Lewis "Bud" Rowland has become the first physician to earn the Muscular Dystrophy Association's Directors' Award. Dr. Rowland, who chaired the neurology department at Columbia University 1973-1998 and continues to teach there, was honored for his research in muscle and nerve physiology, and several neuromuscular conditions. Dr. R. Rodney Howell of the MDA called Dr. Rowland "the gold standard for outstanding patient care, exceptional research, and tireless leadership in the field of neuromuscular disease."

—Mary Ellen Schneider

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