

POLICY & PRACTICE

HHS Awards Alzheimer's Grants

The Administration on Aging is awarding \$10.5 million to support innovative approaches to care both for Alzheimer's patients and their caregivers. "While there has been significant progress in the understanding and treatment of Alzheimer's disease, unless a cure or prevention is found, it is estimated that 14 million Americans will have Alzheimer's disease by 2050," Josefina Carbonell, Assistant Secretary of Aging, said in announcing the awards. "These grants will provide training and support to persons with Alz-

heimer's and their family caregivers to help them cope with their day-to-day challenges until a cure can be found." The awards include \$2.6 million to expand 3-year demonstration programs in nine states, as well as an award to a 1-year demonstration program in New Jersey. In addition to those awards, nearly \$8 million in continuation funding was recently awarded to 28 states.

Shortages in Parkinson's Trials

The majority of physicians who treat patients with Parkinson's disease have never

referred a patient to a clinical trial, according to a survey of 500 physicians and more than 500 patients that was sponsored by the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research. The survey, which was conducted by Harris Interactive, also found that 65% of neurologists and 54% of primary care physicians and gerontologists have discussed clinical trials with 10% or less of their patients. Lack of information about ongoing trials was a major barrier: Only 14% of primary care physicians and 21% of neurologists said they were somewhat or very satisfied with the amount of information available about Parkinson's clinical trials. "People are not

getting the information they need to make decisions as to whether to participate in a trial," said Michael J. Fox, the group's founder. "The fewer people who go into trials, the longer it will take to develop new treatments." The foundation has launched a new Web site, www.PDtrials.org, to educate patients about the clinical trials process and help patients and caregivers locate appropriate trials.

Neurologist's Nobel Intact

The Nobel Foundation is rejecting efforts by a group of physicians and family members of lobotomy patients to revoke the 1949 Nobel Prize in Medicine awarded to late neurologist Egas Moniz, the developer of the procedure. "The Nobel Committee has never taken responsibility for the fact that they awarded a prize for an operation that was a total failure and without any scientific merit," said a statement on the Web site www.psychosurgery.org, which is involved in the campaign to revoke the prize. "In the United States alone, lobotomy, leucotomy, and related operations resulted in at least 50,000 surgical casualties. Through the [Nobel] Committee's actions, they endorsed this brutal operation and provided justification for thousands of more operations." The psychosurgery organization was founded by Christine Johnson, a medical librarian whose grandmother was lobotomized in 1954 and was in and out of institutions for the rest of her life. But Michael Sohlman, executive director of the Nobel Foundation, is having none of it. "There's no possibility to revoke it. It's a nonstarter," he said in an interview. Asked to elaborate further in an e-mail, he wrote, "We divide mankind into two groups—one which has been awarded the Nobel Prize, and the other which has not. We only inform about the former group." He added that "no further statements on this subject have been or, for that matter, will be made by the Nobel Foundation."

NIH Extends Disclosure Deadline

Officials at the Department of Health and Human Services are giving employees of the National Institutes of Health more time to report prohibited financial interests and to divest stock investments. In its announcement of the extension, HHS wrote that the department is considering issuing revisions to its current ethics regulations. In February, the agency issued regulations prohibiting NIH employees from engaging in consulting relationships with organizations that are substantially affected by NIH decisions. And NIH employees who are required to file financial disclosure statements are prohibited from acquiring or holding financial interests, such as stocks, in these affected organizations. NIH employees now have until Oct. 3, 2005, to file financial disclosure reports and until Jan. 2, 2006, to divest prohibited financial interests. This is the second extension offered to NIH employees. "There's no doubt in my mind that at the end of the day, the advice that NIH gives has to be completely untainted, completely unimpeachable, and completely trusted," NIH Director Elias A. Zerhouni, M.D., said during a teleconference sponsored by the Kaiser Family Foundation.

—Joyce Frieden

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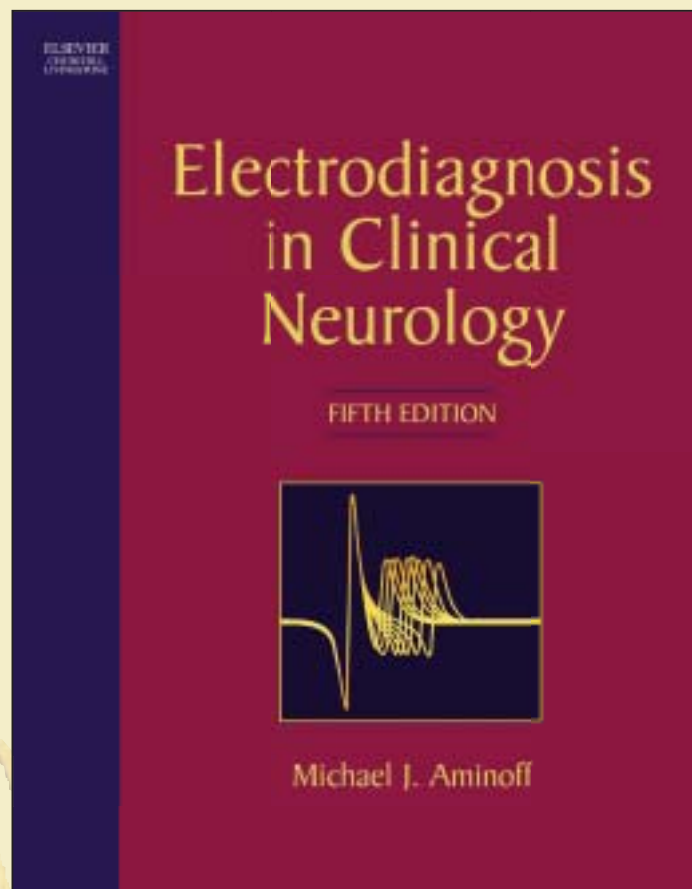
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