Meetings Offer Comfort, Support to Stroke Survivors

Stroke survivors tossed bean bags, took their best shots on a putting green, and posed for pictures in tropical attire at the July meeting of the Hope for a Better Tomorrow support group.

Each month, survivors and their families come together for the meetings, part of a collaboration between Nebraska Medicine, the Brain Aneurysm Foundation and Madonna Rehabilitation Hospitals-Omaha Campus.

“Nebraska’s Hope for a Better Tomorrow support group is a place where stroke survivors and caregivers can share personal stories, express emotions, offer support and encouragement, and be in an atmosphere with others dealing with the same issues as themselves,” says Nichole Cooks, stroke program coordinator. “We share information and resources on the management of symptoms, developing better coping skills, and have guest speakers on special topics requested by the members in hopes that all these benefits will help enhance recovery.”

Members of the group and their family members enjoyed a casual dinner during July’s meeting. They represented different ages and backgrounds but shared a lot of laughs and the comforting feeling of knowing others in the room understood them.

“Watching these members come together is truly an amazing thing, it’s like they are their own little family,” says Rebecca O’Connor, stroke program navigator. “They are always full of encouragement and support in times that can be hard, frustrating and scary, but yet find humor in things they all can relate to on some level. As you sit back and watch them interact you see the strong relationships that have been built along the way and the warm welcome to anyone new. You can see why people come back month after month.”

Meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month at either Madonna’s Omaha campus or the Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center. The next meeting is on Tuesday, Aug. 13. If you’d like more information, call O’Connor at 402.552.3696.
Message from the Chair

The past six months have been an exciting time for the UNMC Department of Neurological Sciences (DONS) and all we serve. While the COVID-19 pandemic has created unpredictable challenges for all, we steadfastly advanced our missions of providing the highest quality patient care, premier education, innovative research, and community outreach initiatives through our mission-driven work.

Patient care team and program advances include a surge in Tele-health and Tele-neurology, aimed at overcoming geographic, economic, physical barriers and promoting time critical delivery of neurological care. Tele-neurology advances have been welcomed by patients across our region.

- The stroke team currently has eight hospitals networked to comprise the Nebraska Medicine Tele-stroke program. These connected hospitals offer critical access to a team of stroke experts who have extensive experience handling stroke emergencies.
- Epilepsy experts from the DONS have pioneered a telehealth clinic for epilepsy patients. The initial tele-clinic for epilepsy has been established in partnership with Mary Lanning Hospital in Hastings, NE.
- Multiple Sclerosis (MS) experts are incorporating virtual technologies in MS Telemedicine and outreach efforts across our region. The MS team has added a clinic offering in North Platte, NE.

The DONS sponsored several notable research meetings and symposia since last fall, reflecting our evolving basic, clinical and translational research portfolio and programs.

The 3rd Annual Great Plains IDeA-CTR scientific meeting convened in October, 2019, focusing on the themes of innovation and entrepreneurship in CTR. Attendance was record-breaking.

The Alzheimer’s Disease Colloquium was held in October, 2019. Several renowned visitors presented their world-leading work on Alzheimer’s research. UNMC/Nebraska Medicine experts, in turn, shared their cutting-edge research with the renowned visitors.

Walter Koroshetz, MD, director of the National Institute of Neurologic Disorders and Stroke (NINDS), visited in November, 2019. Dr. Koroshetz presented on “NINDS and the Taxpayers’ Investment in Neuroscience research,” had discussions with and heard presentations from key researchers, met with administration, and visited our neuroscience research laboratories across campus.

Outreach activity advances were evidenced by expansion of the International Neurology program and our outreach educational conferences.

- Accomplishments include the growth of the Clinical Observership program, the Visiting Scholars program and the Mini-Fellowship Program. These international programs provide programmed experiences for foreign medical graduates or practicing neurologists from other nations to advance their learning in Neurology.
- Patient centered conferences were held for Parkinson’s disease patients and Dystonia patients. Both conferences were well received: over 800 learners attended the Parkinson’s Disease Conference and 80 attended the Dystonia Patient Conference.
- The first regional EEG Technician conference was held in September, 2019.

Our faculty continue to earn impressive achievements. For example, Dr. Diego Torres was selected as the 2020 recipient for the Lennard Tow Humanism in Medicine Award. Dr. Matthew Rizzo was elected to be the chair for the American Brain Coalition. Our faculty have continued to win highly competitive research grant awards and clinical accolades at multiple levels.

The past few months exemplify the dedication, mission-driven work, nimbleness and capability of the DONS team, through thick and thin. We look forward to sharing more with you throughout 2020!

Sincerely,

Matthew Rizzo, MD, FAAN, FANA
Director, Mind and Brain Health Laboratories
Co-Director, Center for Integrative and Translational Neuroscience
Chair, American Brain Coalition

Francis and Edgar Reynolds Professor
Chair, Department of Neurological Sciences
Clinical Program Leader, Neurological Sciences
Director, Great Plains IDeA CTR Network

unmc.edu/neurologicalsciences
Second Chances – Telestroke Program Offers Critical Expertise to Small Towns

Roger Edwards had always been a kidder. So when his wife, Jackie, found him on the floor next to the bed, she thought it was another prank. But she quickly realized that Roger wasn’t moving. Nor was he responding. Jackie picked up the phone and called 911.

An ambulance arrived immediately and took him to the nearest hospital - UnityPoint Health – St. Luke’s in Sioux City, Iowa. “I tried to stay calm and not panic,” recalls Jackie. “But when the hospital ER staff asked me if I wanted to send him to Omaha or let him go, I knew it was serious.”

Roger had suffered the most severe form of stroke - a basilar artery occlusion stroke. With this type of stroke, the blood clot blocks the largest vessel that supplies the brainstem. It carries a high risk of mortality, or severe disability if you survive.

“It’s one of the types of stroke we fear the most,” says Michael Pichler, MD, Nebraska Medicine neurologist. Dr. Pichler was on call that day. St. Luke’s is one of eight hospitals that are part of the Nebraska Medicine Telestroke Program. As members of this program, these hospitals have immediate access to the Nebraska Medicine stroke team for quick assessment of stroke patients who come to their hospital. After the Nebraska Medicine stroke team was contacted, Dr. Pichler immediately was able to remote in via video monitors. Within a few minutes, he had assessed Roger and recommended administration of tPA (a blood thinning drug that helps dissolve the clot) to buy him time to make the air transport to Nebraska Medical Center for emergency stroke surgery.

“Mechanical thrombectomy is an advanced vessel opening procedure performed by trained endovascular neurosurgeons. Using high-tech imaging equipment, the procedure involves threading a catheter through the femoral artery to the site of the clot. The stent is used to remove the clot so blood flow can be restored to the brain.

When Roger arrived at Nebraska Medical Center, the stroke team was waiting. Daniel Surdell, MD, a Nebraska Medicine cerebrovascular and endovascular surgeon, performed the mechanical thrombectomy procedure. “Once we received word that Roger was being transferred here, our stroke team was deployed and ready,” says Dr. Surdell. “Time is critical when it comes to stroke. Our goal is to treat the patient quickly and appropriately to reduce the amount of damage caused by the stroke as much as possible.”

“I was amazed at how quickly they got things going,” says Jackie. “They immediately took him into surgery and shortly after the procedure, he was moving around and answering questions. The next day while he was in the intensive care unit, he even gave one of the nurses a high five!”

“The first memory I have is walking down the hallway, carrying my walker instead of using it,” says Roger. “Even the doctors said they were amazed that I had made it and was doing so well.”

“Performing the thrombectomy procedure probably saved his life, or at the very least, has allowed him to enjoy quality of life,” says Dr. Pichler. “This type of stroke can leave a patient completely paralyzed in all extremities and unable to communicate.”
Tele-Health

Tele-Epilepsy

Nebraska has more than 20,000 patients with epilepsy, however with no Level IV Epilepsy centers outside Omaha, patients often travel several hours for an appointment. In addition, many patients with epilepsy are unable to drive due to their condition. To fill this much needed gap in access to care, the UNMC Department of Neurological Sciences opened the pioneering telehealth clinic for epilepsy patients in the state. The teleclinic was set up with partners at Mary Lanning Hospital in Hastings, NE.

Both patients and local physicians have been very receptive. Most patients report that telemedicine is saving them more than 5 hours of travel time and prefer to continue follow up care via telemedicine. For patients whose seizures are refractory to medications alone, further neurodiagnostic tests are scheduled at the Comprehensive Epilepsy Center at UNMC, Omaha. So far this has been a great partnership and the epilepsy team is actively working on expanding telehealth access to two additional sites in Iowa and Nebraska.

Drs. Surdell and Pichler are backed by a team of health care providers who have a wealth of experience and stroke expertise. The team also includes two additional vascular neurologists Drs. Marco Gonzalez-Castellon and Pierre Fayad, neurohospitalist Dr. T. Scott Diesing and stroke nurse and neurointensivist Dr. Daryl Gress. They are part of the only certified Comprehensive Stroke Center in the region, the highest level of stroke certification available. It is the only stroke team in the area equipped to handle the most complex stroke cases and provide specialized around-the-clock treatment 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

“We have seen a lot of success stories due to the Telestroke Program,” says Dr. Pichler. “This program allows small hospitals that do not have neurology or stroke neurology on staff to have access to 24/7 stroke expertise through Nebraska Medicine. It allows us to quickly assess and appropriately diagnose patients and provide potentially lifesaving interventions.”

Because of the quick diagnosis and treatment performed by the Nebraska Medicine stroke team, Roger survived his stroke and has recovered remarkably well. Aside from driving, due to a blind spot in each eye caused by the stroke, Roger says he can do just about everything he could before the stroke.

“Whatever they are doing, they need to keep doing it,” says Roger. “They did an excellent job and as a result, they gave me a second chance.”
Tele-Health
Meeting the Demands, Virtually

The Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Division integrates innovative, non-traditional care models to improve access to customized and increasingly complex specialty care for a growing number of patients.

MS telemedicine is one such innovation overcoming the geographic, economic and physical barriers that limit the delivery of quality care to certain medically underserved populations.

In 2016, Kathleen Healey, PhD, APRN, was the first in her department to establish telemedicine clinics, conducting virtual follow-up visits with patients in Kearney who couldn’t easily attend them locally. Later, Healey integrated telemedicine into her nationally recognized MS at Home Access (MAHA) program, alternating in-home face-to-face visits with in-home virtual visits to increase face time in these at-risk home-bound patients with advanced MS disability.

Farther afield, Division Chief Dr. Rana Zabad augmented her already robust satellite clinic offering telemedicine visits in the North Platte Great Plain. Expanding this telemedicine network to patients within the tri-cities region in Grand Island is in the works.

In the coming year, the MS team plans to incorporate virtual technologies in its outreach efforts, including the MS Symposium and MS Patient Education Series, to build stronger relationships between patients, providers and communities alike.
The 3rd Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM) for the Great Plains IDeA-Clinical Translational Research (CTR) network was held at the UNMC in Omaha, NE, on October 23-24, 2019.

There was a record-breaking attendance with nearly 230 attendees from across the country. The focus of this year’s meeting was innovation and entrepreneurship in CTR. In a year marked by progress, such as, grant writing workshops and mentor training; physical resource development including situation of new equipment to catalyze CTR across all partner sites; dissemination of services to facilitate CTR; leveraging of resources across IDeA programs; development of new resources such as an Alzheimer’s Disease practice-based research network and registry; and funding of new pilots and further supporting our Scholars – this year’s ASM highlighted our many accomplishments while bringing in renowned experts in clinical and translational research from across our network and country.

In line with the theme of innovation and entrepreneurship in CTR, Dr. Krishan Arora, program director in the division for research capacity building at the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS), gave a keynote speech highlighting resources and strategies for investigators to bring ideas from the “lab to market.” Dr. Douglas Wright, Kansas INBRE principal investigator and president of the National Association of IDeA Principal Investigators, honed in on regional resources for fast tracking early stage science to market. Dr. Beverly Davidson, chief scientific strategy officer, Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, discussed innovative new therapies for neurodegeneration. The meeting also showcased regional resources and success stories of innovation in CTR, evidence-based repositories and comparative effectiveness research, intelligent algorithms in medicine, access and use of EHR data, and surviving study sections.

The ASM proudly hosted clinicians, basic and clinical scientists, community members, educators and administrators, and welcomed a diverse set of ideas and backgrounds. We continue to strengthen our network to build CTR, as the ultimate goal is to improve the health of individuals across our region.
Alzheimer’s Disease Colloquium

In the Midwest, the need to expand Alzheimer’s disease research is growing, and, according to Howard Fox, MD, PhD, the Alzheimer’s Disease Colloquium was an important part of that effort. The UNMC College of Medicine hosted a two-day event on Oct. 29 and 30 at the Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center.

The event was open to the UNMC and Nebraska Medicine communities to inform attendees of ongoing clinical trials, advancements in diagnostics, current research and how the National Alzheimer’s Association works with caregivers and patients. The colloquium also allowed experts on campus to present their work to world leaders in Alzheimer’s research.

Dr. Fox hopes the event will create an opportunity for others within UNMC and Nebraska Medicine to become involved with Alzheimer’s research, whether it’s on campus or in conjunction with other medical centers around the nation. “We clearly have outstanding work here,” Dr. Fox said. “But there’s a lot more we can do.”

Nebraska would be the only Midwestern medical center with significant research surrounding Alzheimer’s disease, and, for Dr. Fox, making that a reality is important to helping Nebraskans age cognitively healthy.

Featured presenters included:
- Clifford Jack, MD, professor of radiology at Mayo Clinic
- Helena Chui, MD, chair and professor of neurology at the University of Southern California and principal investigator for the National Institute on Aging (NIA)-Alzheimer Disease Research Center in Los Angeles
- William Mobley, MD, PhD, professor of neurology and associate dean of neuroscience initiatives, UC San Diego
- Keith Fargo, PhD, director of scientific programs and outreach at the Alzheimer’s Association

Eliezer Masliah, MD, director of the division of neurosciences for the NIA, will delivered the keynote address. There were breakout sessions covering a variety of topics as well as a panel discussion about what is needed for progress in the field of Alzheimer’s Disease.

The conference featured information on how to identify proper care for patients and their caregivers, and specifically how to do this in Nebraska’s rural areas, which don’t have the same access as more populated areas. The association will identify the special challenges in this care and help professionals identify solutions.

Nearly 100 guests attended the public presentation of the AD Colloquium.
Walter Koroshetz, MD, the director of the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS), spoke at UNMC on Tuesday, Nov. 19, in the Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center. Dr. Koroshetz, who oversees the scientific and administrative functions of NINDS, presented on “NINDS and the Taxpayers’ Investment in Neuroscience Research.”

Matt Rizzo, MD, chair of the UNMC Department of Neurological Sciences, called Dr. Koroshetz’ visit an honor for UNMC. “Dr. Koroshetz drives the National Institutes of Health Brain Initiative, which is revolutionizing our understanding of the human brain,” Dr. Rizzo said. “Deeper understanding is essential to cures for difficult neurological conditions such as stroke, MS, ALS, tumors, trauma and degenerative disorders such as Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s disease, which incur huge costs and enormous human suffering. Dr. Koroshetz’ visit recognizes our hard work in the neurological sciences and underscores strategic opportunities with NIH for early diagnosis, treatment and neurological cures for people across Nebraska, the region, and the world,” Dr. Rizzo said.

UNMC Chancellor Jeffrey P. Gold, MD, introduces Dr. Koroshetz.

Dr. Koroshetz received a DONS lab tour.
EEG Tech Conference

On September 28, 2019, Nebraska Medicine and UNMC held their first EEG technologist conference right here on campus, driven and organized by the Nebraska medicine epilepsy team.

Born out of the dream to pass knowledge onto the next generation and to provide educational opportunities to EEG technologists in the Midwest when so much education is concentrated on the coasts making it financially difficult to keep up on their education. The sessions were presented by the epileptologists of our own epilepsy team, as well as guest epileptologists from Boys Town and Children’s hospital here in Omaha, giving highlights to the specialists available here locally in the Midwest.

The topics covered various aspects of EEG: artifacts that can be seen on an EEG study to types of brainwave activity over various age ranges and research such as autoimmune encephalopathy and treatments for epilepsy such as responsive neurostimulation; all topics of which the epileptologists of our community are highly experienced. This conference was also a stepping block in establishing the growing epilepsy program here at Nebraska Medicine and the presence of our program on the national level for both education and care. We plan on working hard to continue the trend upwards and have started to be a clinical site for students and are actively planning on another conference next Fall, a conference which we hope will become an annual event.

Sung-Ho Huh, PhD, mentioned in NIH Director’s Blog on May 23

UNMC researcher Sung-Ho Huh, PhD, assistant professor of neurological sciences, was mentioned in the May 23 NIH Director’s Blog, posted by Dr. Francis Collins, MD, PhD.

In a piece called “A Nose for Science,” Dr. Collins references work Dr. Huh did while at Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis. Dr. Huh has continued to distinguish himself at UNMC, being named a 2016 New Investigator.
Parkinson’s Disease Conference

The UNMC Parkinson Disease Symposium for patients, families, and caregivers took place October 14, 2019 at Embassy Suites and Conference Center, La Vista, NE and included more than 800 attendees and 25 vendors/sponsors.

Our focus for the Symposium was to educate, inspire and empower individuals affected by Parkinson’s disease (PD) through providing didactic learning, research, and networking. The education sessions were provided by our renowned movement disorder faculty and therapy (physical, occupational, speech and nutrition) department, and focused on PD motor and non-motor symptoms, new and emerging therapies/advanced management, and optimizing the quality of life when living with PD.

There were several question and answer sessions that provided attendees opportunities to ask our PD expert panel a constellation of questions, which promoted and enhanced interaction between participants and presenters. Our symposium concluded with keynote speaker, Brian Grant, who delivered an inspirational testament of his journey with PD. Brian is a retired National Basketball Association (NBA) player, and founder of Brian Grant Foundation whom was an NBA idol known for tenacious rebounding and a fearless attitude on the court. Brian was diagnosed with young-onset PD at age 36.

Today, Brian continues to inspire as a speaker, philanthropist, and a patient who insists on thriving with PD. He continuously strives to motivate and encourage others with PD to lead an active and fulfilling life through his foundation.

The symposium powerpoint presentations and video playlists are available online at unmc.edu/neurologicalsciences/patient-care/programs/movement-disorders

The next Patient and Caregiver Parkinson Disease Symposium will be October 2021.
Dystonia Outreach Event is Well-Attended

More than 80 people met on Friday, November 22, 2019 at the Scott Conference Center for a Dystonia Patient Education Program sponsored by UNMC and the Dystonia Medical Research Foundation (DMRF).

The program provided an overview of what dystonia is, how it is treated, a personal perspective on how dystonia impacts patients, and information on the DMRF. Participants had the opportunity to learn more about the Movement Disorders Program at UNMC and to ask questions of the experts. Featured speakers included Dr. Diego Torres-Russotto, who was the organizer and chair of the program. He presented on the pharmacological interventions for dystonia; Dr. Mara Seier provided an overview of the disorder; and Dr. Aviva Abosch provided information on the surgical treatments for dystonia, including deep brain stimulation. Eric Tipler generously shared his personal, inspiring story of his diagnosis and treatment journey. DMRF executive director, Janet Hieshetter presented an overview of the Foundation’s programs and resources. Numerous participants expressed gratitude to UNMC and the DMRF for hosting the morning conference and expressed interest in developing a dystonia support group. Plans are underway to develop a group to support those affected by dystonia and their families.
International Neurology Program

The International Neurology Program has been growing exponentially over the last few years since its inception in 2016. This has been helped a lot by addition of a focal person for outreach and social media engagement within the department, Web/Social Media & Events Coordinator Sallie Weathers, BS.

Clinical Observership Program
The Clinical Observership Program has been the oldest and longest running, providing an experience of the neurology clinical practice to foreign medical graduates who are looking to transition to a training program or planning to practice in their home country. The program continues to receive great interest with more than 100 applications received last year. We have now extended the program to introduce a research observership with an intention to expose the foreign medical graduates to clinical research; an experience most graduates lack from developing countries.

Visiting Scholars Program
This program was complemented by a Visiting Scholars Program in 2017, with the intention to provide more focused and advanced subspecialty exposure to practicing neurologists from other countries. This program is a customized experience for an applicant, usually with a practicing neurologist and faculty in an institution in their home country. The visiting scholar joins with a specific training requirement or purpose with the hope that they will learn new skills or protocols, and take them back to their home institutions to improve healthcare delivery. So far we have had two visiting scholars in epilepsy and EEG monitoring, and neuromuscular. We will be looking to slowly grow this program by adding a few more visiting scholars this year.

Mini-Fellowship Program
Our most successful program is the Mini-fellowship in Movement Disorders. This innovative and blended learning program with online modules was created for the movement disorder subspecialty, given the lack of training in various developing countries and difficulty of coming to the U.S. for a full formal fellowship. This program was designed to fill in the gap by offering training to neurologists within their own environment while doing their clinical practice within their own home institution.

A pilot project was started three years ago in partnership with Pakistan Society of Neurology and Movement Disorder Society of Pakistan, to assess effective engagement with neurologists who are busy with their own practice in an online comprehensive program. The program includes weekly assignments, quizzes and reading material. The participants were encouraged to discuss their own cases from their clinics, often with video recording of their patient examination. The program is a resounding success! The participants worked hard throughout the six month online course and found it highly useful and efficient. We saw an improvement of 30 percent on average between pretest and post-test. We received high quality feedback on improvement in their patient care and ability to provide care to movement disorder patients. The program piloted for the first two years with Pakistan Society see INP pg 13
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of Neurology graduated thirty neurologists in two years, and was extended to become a regional program to Middle East last year switching to UNMC’s platform of CANVAS catalog. Last year, the nine participants included faculty from Saudi Arabia and Dubai, along with wide ranging participants from physical medicine (PM&R), psychiatry, internal medicine and neurology. We will continue to expand to other countries and to other physicians including internal medicine in general physicians, primary care, psychiatry, physical medicine, and rehab, to provide this much needed clinical skill and ability. We are actively enrolling applicants in 2020.

One of the strengths of our department are the faculty connections with various countries in the world, and we intend to capitalize on that to bring about change in various countries in the world of neurology, education and clinical care. We have worked with two of our residents to reach out to their countries of origin including the Neurological Society in Sudan and University of Peru to develop collaborations. This year we successfully connected with Hamad Medical Corporation in Qatar, and offered a half-day movement disorder workshop on clinical cases and use of Botulinum Toxin injection in Doha, Qatar. We also have faculty developing collaborations with the community in India to provide education in epilepsy, a huge economical problem which is under-treated and undermanaged.

Faculty have developed strong ties with the neurology community in Pakistan over the years. A two-day movement disorder training was offered for a third year in a row to junior neurology faculty nationally in collaboration with Movement Disorder Society of Pakistan. We also helped organize a master trainer program in collaboration with Movement Disorders Society of Pakistan where neurology faculty alumni of the UNMC MD mini-fellowship, were trained over a month to develop quality teaching material in Parkinson’s disease for primary care physician leading to a one day conference in Islamabad, Pakistan. This master trainer cohort will now replicate this one-day Parkinson’s conference for primary care physicians across the country, and in various cities to provide education to thousands of primary care physicians.

We intend to grow our capabilities to provide good quality online education and blended learning in various areas in neurology within Nebraska and internationally this year. The online programs as well as workshops and conferences were all provided in collaboration with the Center for Continuing Education at the University of Nebraska, through which we provide Category 1, AMA Category 1 CME credits to all the participants as well as certificates of completion.
Matt Rizzo, M.D., Appointed Chair of the American Brain Coalition

Dr. Rizzo is the Frances & Edgar Reynolds Chair of the UNMC Department of Neurological Sciences. He also serves as director of neuroscience clinical programs, co-director of the Nebraska Regent’s Center for Integrative and Translational Neuroscience, and director of the National Institutes of Health’s Great Plains IDeA Clinical and Translational Research Network.

The American Brain Coalition (ABC) is a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit organization that seeks to advance the understanding of the functions of the brain and to reduce the burden of brain disorders through public education and advocacy. Dr. Rizzo was appointed by the current ABC board of directors, and began serving a two-year term on Oct. 21. As chair, Dr. Rizzo will oversee the board and staff of the ABC, as well as the organization’s advocacy and program committees and innovation initiatives.

“ABC membership comprises the United States’ leading professional neurological, psychological and psychiatric associations and patient organizations,” Dr. Rizzo said. “During my term as board chair, I’d like to see the ABC increase its academic membership, amplify its partnerships with other brain-related organizations, and increase its grant opportunities. To do this, I’d like to start by creating several working groups to further advance the ABC’s mission, vision, goals, membership, and fundraising opportunities.”

Dr. Rizzo has been a member of the coalition since the American Neurological Association joined the coalition in 2005. He has served as a board member of the ABC since the fall of 2015 and has served as the ABC’s Program Committee chair since the Program Committee was formed in 2017.

ABC leverages the resources of its members to advocate for:

- Research funding and progress toward cures;
- Building a health care system more responsive to people with both acute and chronic brain disorders; and
- Advancing public understanding about the cause, impact, and consequences of neurologic and psychiatric illness in society through lobbying and advocacy efforts.
Diego Torres-Russotto, M.D., Receives Leonard Tow Humanism in Medicine Award

Dr. Diego Torres-Russotto was selected by the GHHS Awards committee as the 2020 recipient for the Leonard Tow Humanism in Medicine award.

Leonard Tow Humanism in Medicine Award recognizes a faculty member who demonstrates both clinical excellence and outstanding compassion in the delivery of care and who shows respect for patients, their families, and healthcare colleagues. The Gold Foundation launched this award in 1991 at Columbia University College of Physicians & Surgeons. The Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey began replicating these awards nationwide in 1998, with participation from The Gold Foundation. In 2003, thanks to a generous donation from Leonard Tow, these awards became solely sponsored and administered by The Gold Foundation.

The GHHS Award Committee selected only one faculty and one graduating medical student for the award according to the GHHS bylaws. The Committee stating that this is a true testament to Dr. Torres’ character.

There was a formal GHHS induction ceremony on Saturday, February 1 at the Storz Pavilion at UNMC. Dr. Torres was also be inducted into the Gold Humanism Honor Society at the induction ceremony.
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A Desire to Give Back

UNMC is in a key position to leverage clinical and research expertise by creating synergies between clinicians, teachers and scientists to transform neurological care now and for future generations.

Investing in the UNMC Department of Neurological Sciences will advance research for effective treatment and prevention of neurologic diseases that threaten life, independence, productivity and happiness. Your generous gift can impact big discoveries and revolutionize care for those living with these devastating diseases. No gift is too small, and all gifts have the power to transform lives.

To learn more about how you can help, please contact Edwin V. Lyons, director of development, at 402-504-3339 or edwin.lyons@nufoundation.org