

**PSYCHOLOGIST ROBERT MITTAN VISITS OXFORD TO  
EXPLAIN THE EFFECTS OF EPILEPSY ON THE BRAIN**



For the past 25 years, Mittan has traveled the world presenting a two-day seminar called the Seizures & Epilepsy Education program, or SEE. He says that many of the three million people diagnosed with the disease in this country remain confused even after medical treatment. “For physicians, I mean, they have a problem. The way medicine is practiced in the United States, they don’t really have the time to sit down and explain in detail the issues that patients and their families need to know.”

There are more than 40 different types of the disease, and it can afflict people of any age. The disease is frequently caused by a stroke or head injury, and as baby boomers get older, the rate of people with epilepsy in the country is expected to soar.

Thanks to the organization and funding efforts by Mr. & Mrs. Eric Weber of Tupelo, Project RUN of the North MS Regional Center, and the Davis



family, Dr. Mittan’s first trip to Mississippi was very successful. The Epilepsy Foundation of Mississippi hopes to make sure this is not his last visit to the magnolia state.



**NEW MEMBERS**

- |                            |                                |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Mr. & Mrs. Lundy Gunn      | Ms. Aisha Ayanna Williams      |
| Mr. & Mrs. W.G. Harvey Jr. | Mrs. Carolyn S. Salinas        |
| Mr. & Mrs. Glynn Ingram    | Mr. Willie Davis               |
| Mr. & Mrs. Hugh Little     | Mr. & Mrs. Eric Weber          |
| Mr. & Mrs. Mark Michaelis  | Mr. John Ravenstein            |
| Dr. & Mrs. Abha Mishra     | Dr. & Mrs. A.C. Tipton         |
| Mrs. Olivia Parks          | Drs. Michael & Phyllis Nowicki |
| Mr. & Mrs. Steve Patton    |                                |

**2009 SUMMER CAMP**

The Alvin P. Flannes Summer Camp is for children, ages 8-16, who have been diagnosed with a seizure disorder. Camp is conducted free of charge at Camp Wesley Pines.

Camp is scheduled for June 2 through June 6, 2009. If you plan to attend camp this year and you have not received an application, please contact the Epilepsy Foundation of Mississippi at 601.936.5222 or email [kristinmsepilepsy@bellsouth.net](mailto:kristinmsepilepsy@bellsouth.net).

## LEGISLATIVE DAY 2009

On March 26, 2009, the Epilepsy Foundation of Mississippi (EFM) spent a day at the Mississippi State Capitol meeting with legislators.

Legislative Day has proven to be an avenue for the organization to bring awareness of the programs and services we offer. Funding we receive helps us to continue emergency medicine assistance, nurses and law enforcement trainings, support groups, summer camp, and distribution of educational materials throughout the entire state of



Mississippi. This was a great opportunity to inform our state legislators of the need for continued funding. While on a field trip to the capitol kids stop by to learn what happens to the brain when someone has a seizure using an electrostorm ball.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### *Tupelo Support Group*

All Saints Episcopal Church  
Tupelo, MS

1st Monday of the month at 6 pm unless a holiday

### *Rankin/Hinds/Madison Support Group*

Next meeting 6:30 pm May 12, 2009  
Location TBA

### *June 2-6, 2009*

Alvin P. Flannes Summer Camp  
Camp Wesley Pines in Gallman, MS

### *October 10, 2009*

10 am – 2 pm  
Tupelo Walk for Epilepsy  
Ballard Park  
Tupelo, MS

### *2nd Annual*

*Off the Leash for Epilepsy*  
TBA

For information regarding the events above  
call 601.936.5222 or send an email to  
kristinmsepilepsy@bellsouth.net

## NEW RESEARCH SUGGESTS COMMON ANTISEIZURE MEDICATIONS MAY INCREASE CARDIOVASCULAR RISK

An important clinical repercussion in the treatment of epilepsy has been discovered by a research team led by Scott Mintzer, M.D., assistant professor in the Department of Neurology at Jefferson Medical College of Thomas Jefferson University. The team has determined that two of the most commonly prescribed antiseizure medications may lead to significantly increased levels of cholesterol, C-reactive protein and other markers of cardiovascular disease risk. The finding – set to appear in the April issue of *Annals of Neurology* – may help doctors manage the care of patients with seizures more effectively by prescribing different antiseizure medications that will not adversely affect cardiovascular health.

The study involved two of the most widely-prescribed anticonvulsants – phenytoin (Dilantin®) and carbamazepine (Tegretol®, Carbatrol®) – which have potent effects on many enzymes in the body involved in different areas of metabolism. The researchers recruited 34 epilepsy patients taking either one of those two drugs who were being switched over to one of two newer anti-seizure drugs which do not widely affect enzymes – lamotrigine (Lamictal®) or levetiracetam (Keppra®). The goal was to determine if the change affected the patients' cholesterol levels and other key markers of cardiovascular disease.

Just 6 weeks after the patients' drugs were switched, there were significant declines in total cholesterol, non-high-density lipoprotein (commonly referred to as 'bad') cholesterol, triglycerides and C-reactive protein, suggesting the older, commonly-used drugs might substantially increase the risk of cardiovascular disease.

“The epilepsy patients in this study saw a rapid and clinically significant improvement in several markers related to cardiovascular disease, including a decrease in total cholesterol that averaged 26 points. This is almost certainly not due to some positive effect from the new drugs. It's a consequence of being taken off the older ones, which were causing the cholesterol and other markers to be elevated in the first place,” said Dr. Mintzer. “While more investigation is needed, these results may help physicians better understand the risks of these drugs and choose the most appropriate treatment for their epilepsy patients, especially those who are already at risk for cardiovascular disease or have a family history of it.”

Dilantin is the most commonly prescribed anticonvulsant in this country, and has been since its discovery in 1938. Throughout the industrialized world, Tegretol has been the most commonly prescribed anticonvulsant for more than 20 years. The effect of older antiseizure medications (particularly Tegretol) on cholesterol has been known for 30 years.

The results of this study could have far-reaching effects on how the millions of current, and future patients are, or will be, treated. The study was funded by the Epilepsy Foundation through the Edna Flaig Evans Trust.

*Source: Thomas Jefferson University news release. Reviewed by Epilepsy Foundation Professional Advisory Board member Jacqueline A. French, M.D.*



## KIDS SPEAK UP! CAMPAIGN 2009

As part of the Kids Speak Up! Campaign 2009 on March 29-31, Mahogney Ivory, her mother, Denise Ivory, and Epilepsy Foundation of Mississippi staff Beth Scarbrough and Kristin Lape visited the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. Visits were conducted with Senator Thad Cochran's Health Liaison, Sara Love Swaney, Senator Roger Wicker's Health Liaison, Susan Sweat and Representative Gregg Harper. Through this program Mahogney, who has epilepsy, learned the importance of speaking up about her condition to others to help raise awareness about epilepsy. During Mahogney's visit with her Senators and Representatives she had the opportunity to discuss the importance of funding, research and education on behalf of the other 3 million Americans, 350,000 of them children, including 50,000 Mississippians who have epilepsy. Kids Speak Up! Brings young people with epilepsy ages of 7 to 16



from all over the country to personally petition congressional leaders for aid in assuring better access to care, improved public education and greater research toward a cure for everyone with epilepsy.

## Epilepsy Foundation of Mississippi BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Kelle Barfield**  
President

**Bill Mounger**  
Treasurer

**Grace Parmley**  
Secretary

**Dr. Victor G. Dostrow**  
Board Member at Large

Barbie Bassett  
Ellison Belt  
Phil Flowers

Dr. Wendell Helveston, M.D.  
Teresa Hill, MSN, NP-C

Dr. Nancy Horton, Ph.D., MPH  
Glynn Ingram  
Jeff Leber

Tina Martin Ph.D.  
Dr. Collette Parker, M.D.

### Department of Mental Health Funding Acknowledgement

*Publication of this newsletter is partially funded by a grant from the Department of Mental Health.*

## A SUMMER OF COURAGE BY A VERY GRATEFUL MOTHER, SARAH MELVIN

The idea of a week at camp usually does not strike terror in a parent's heart, but it did ours. We had never heard about a camp for children and teenagers with epilepsy. I guess we were so busy thinking about our daughter's safety, medications, schooling, and living day to day.

The discovery of the Alvin P. Flannes Summer Camp held by the Epilepsy Foundation of Mississippi has been one of the greatest miracles in our daughter, Lianna's life. I know that sounds like a very strong word to use the word "miracle", but you must understand the change we saw in her after she attended the four day camp.

The minute we drove up on the last day of camp the difference was the beginning. The joy in her face and her energy showed as she introduced us to her counselors and new friends. It was an amazing transformation. This experience didn't stop when we left camp. The stories bubbled out of her for weeks. Her joy in being so accepted, the opportunity to help other campers with their seizures, and the experience of seeing that she could "be on her own" and feel safe - had all changed her life.

This few days changed our daughter and infused her with a renewed courage in the next few years. I say "renewed" because she had always been a fighter. As a newborn sent home with little hope of a very long life and the EEG's to prove it, she has fought to live. She blossomed into a beautiful young woman with no further seizure activity until age 13 when the grand mal seizures began again. After multiple medications and two and a half years on the Ketogenic diet, she again returned to the medications for the seizures.

In July 2006 Lianna had the monitoring and surgery for a Vagus Nerve Stimulator. Her last seizure was February 2007. Her last seizure medication was March 2008. The experience at Epilepsy Camp helped Lianna make the decisions for the monitoring and the surgery. She had lived that four days with other campers who had the VNS and that knowledge was empowering.

We will always be grateful for the changes that Director Beth Scarbrough, the comforting Camp Nurses, and the wonderful Counselors have caused in our daughter, Lianna's life. The power they infuse those campers with is truly a life-changing gift. Thank you to all the people who make this camp possible. Your gifts and volunteering are changing lives!

### CONTRIBUTIONS

Dr. Cindy Noble in honor of Dr. Victor G. Dostrow, M.D.  
Mr. Willie Davis in honor of Willie G. Davis Jr.  
Mr. & Mrs. Eric Weber in honor of Helen Weber  
Mr. John Ravenstein in honor of John Ryan Ravenstein  
Drs. Michael & Phyllis Nowicki in honor of Emma Pitchford

### MEMORIALS

Dr. & Mrs. Ray Pate in memory of Dr. Kenneth Ray Pate  
Dr. Cindy Noble in memory of Dr. Bruce Parks  
Mr. & Mrs. W.G. Harvey Jr.\*  
Ergon & the Lampton Family\*  
Louise & Willis Bethay\*  
Dr. & Mrs. A.C. Tipton \*  
\*Memorials in memory of Katherine Riddell

## Foundation Support

Office Numbers: 601-936-5222 or 1-800-898-0291

The Epilepsy Foundation of Mississippi needs your help. The Foundation provides assistance to over 50,000 Mississippians living with seizure disorders.

Please remember the Epilepsy Foundation and the people we serve by making a **tax deductible** gift. Your donation will assist with emergency medication or summer camp for a child, and help continue the educational programs and services we provide for people with epilepsy in Mississippi.

\_\_\_\_\_ I want to support the Epilepsy Foundation of MS programs/services

\_\_\_\_\_ I want to contribute to the Dr. Victor G. Dostrow Emergency Medication Fund

\_\_\_\_\_ Enclosed is my contribution of \$

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to become a member of the Epilepsy Foundation with my annual gift of **\$25.00**.

### *Please Print*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for your support!*

## EEM Mission

*The Epilepsy Foundation of Mississippi is a statewide, non-profit organization dedicated to the prevention and cure of seizure disorders, the alleviation of their effects and the promotion of independence and optimal quality of life for people with epilepsy. The Foundation seeks to accomplish this mission through education, research, advocacy and direct client services.*

### Staff Information

#### **Beth Scarbrough**

Executive Director  
bethmsepilepsy@bellsouth.net

#### **Leann Wann**

Accounting Manager  
leannmsepilepsy@bellsouth.net

#### **Tres Robertson Townsend**

Income Development/Special  
Events Coordinator  
tresmsepilepsy@bellsouth.net

#### **Kristin Lape**

Education Services Coordinator  
kristinmsepilepsy@bellsouth.net

### **Epilepsy Foundation of Mississippi**

2001 Airport Road, Suite 307  
Jackson, Mississippi 39232

PRSRT STD  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Jackson, MS  
Permit No. 369