

2009 Award Recipient: Richard Bedlack, MD, PhD, MSc

Anyone who has met Richard Bedlack, MD, PhD, MSc is well aware of his engaging personality and enthusiasm. Bedlack has the ability to make people sit up and listen intently to his message, which he promotes passionately through all facets of his life. Bedlack's effectiveness and enthusiasm on behalf of his patients led to him to be honored at the 2009 AAN Annual Meeting as the third Kenneth M. Viste, Jr., MD, Patient Advocate of the Year.



It was during Bedlack's residency at Duke University that he first encountered amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). He recalled being fascinated by the presentation of the disease, intrigued by all the mysteries surrounding it, and horrified by how little the medical community had to offer.

Advancing the plight of patients with ALS would become Bedlack's lifetime focus and passion. In 2001, Bedlack started an ALS Clinic at Duke with only one physical therapist on staff. Their goal was to build a multi-disciplinary care team to improve the quality and length of life for patients with ALS. Through fundraising and partnerships, Bedlack has been able to expand Duke's ALS Clinic to nearly 20 staff members including speech, occupational, and respiratory therapists. Bedlack currently serves as the Director of the ALS Clinic and as an Associate Professor of Neurology for Duke University.

In 2008 Bedlack attended the Academy's Donald M. Palatucci Advocacy Leadership Forum. Bedlack's Advocacy Action Plan involved work to increase patients with ALS who receive specialized care, higher enrollment in ALS research studies, investigation and debunking of "alternative" ALS treatment options, and service as a liaison for policymakers on issues of importance to ALS research.