Capitol Hill Report

Capitol Hill Report presents regular updates on legislative and regulatory actions and how the Academy ensures that the voice of neurology is heard on Capitol Hill. It is emailed to US members twice monthly and is posted at AAN.com/view/HillReport. Below are some recent highlights.

**Epilepsy Centers of Excellence Get Funding Increase**

One of the first true successes of the AAN advocacy program was passing of legislation in 2008 to create Epilepsy Centers of Excellence (ECoE) at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), with an annual appropriation of $6 million. Data now show that the centers are saving the VA money, access and quality of care for veterans with epilepsy has improved, and the VA has become a national leader in providing epilepsy care through telemedicine. Now, the VA has increased 2014 funding for the ECoEs to $8 million to support a national administrative infrastructure and fund the database and information systems. This will enable collaboration, outreach, and referral plans to all VA sites so that the mission of aiding all veterans with epilepsy, in any geographic location, can be met.

**Alessi Wins Viste Patient Advocate of the Year Award**

Anthony G. Alessi, MD, MMM, FAAN, has been named the 2014 Kenneth M. Viste, Jr., MD, Patient Advocate of the Year. He was honored for his persistent work advocating on behalf of people with neurologic disease, particularly the impoverished citizens of Haiti.

“I first met Dr. Alessi at the Palatucci Advocacy Leadership Forum and have been impressed with his tireless work in improving patient access to care and promoting quality care,” said Elaine C. Jones, MD, FAAN, in her nomination letter. “He maintains an active practice in Connecticut while at the same time developing a reputation in US sports neurology and internationally with work in Haiti. His latest endeavors in Haiti are most impressive.”

Alessi has overcome substantial challenges in setting up a neurologic clinic at St. Luc Hospital in Port Au Prince. “He has found Haitian doctors and staff who are dedicated to learning and developing this clinic,” said Jones. “He has committed endless time and money to build the necessary relationships and support.”

Alessi also has been active in raising funds to help bring other AAN members to help in Haiti, including Jones. “My recent trip there showed how the work he has done is starting to pay off. There is now a doctor dedicated to learning neurology and organizing and caring for patients with neurological problems. A CT scanner is available and funded for imaging of the brain, and recently we added the ability to remotely access and read scans while teaching the doctors at the hospital in real time.”

A longtime advocate against the brain-damaging sport of boxing, Alessi also has worked to increase the awareness of the dangers of concussion in other sporting activities such as football and bull riding.

“Even with his patients in the United States, I have seen that when a barrier to care or treatment arises, Dr. Alessi finds a way to get the patients what they need,” concluded Jones in her nomination. “It is this unflagging commitment to patient care that makes him an impressive advocate for our profession and patient care wherever the need arises.”

Alessi will receive the award at the Annual Meeting at the April 28 reception for graduates of the Donald M. Palatucci Advocacy Leadership Forum.