Dear readers,

The winter has almost passed already, and we can look forward to yet another wonderful spring in the Lowcountry. Since I write this from Stockholm, where the snow is still falling and the roads are icy, I miss the wonderful long and early spring, with the Azaleas and the Camellias blooming all over our beautiful state. The winter in Sweden is long and harsh, often lasting well into May, and it is no wonder that the Swedes love their spring and summer so much.

The recession that has hit the US hard during the last two years is less obvious in Sweden, but the same serious and worried discussions around health care and the future for older persons with Alzheimer’s disease and other devastating age-related diseases is raging here as well. It is disheartening that we cannot come up with better long-term solutions for health care and especially elder care.

In this issue, you will read about a resource program from the Lieutenant Governor’s office on Aging, SC Access. This information program, available to older adults, caregivers, and health care professionals, is designed to disseminate accurate and up to date information regarding health care in our state. The Lt. Gov’s Office on Aging has been a long-term collaborator for the Center on Aging.

You can also read about a recent research study, investigating effects of an Alzheimer medication for individuals with Down Syndrome (DS) and Alzheimer’s disease. DS individuals have a genetic trisomy (three copies of a gene) of a gene that is heavily linked to Alzheimer’s disease, APP. Because of this increased gene dose, they gather amyloid plaques in their brain, and most DS individuals over the age of 50 eventually develop dementia. Sadly, scientists have found that medication that is effective in slowing some of the symptoms of Alzheimer’s disease is ineffective for DS individuals with Alzheimer’s disease. DS individuals live much longer now than ever before, but more effective treatment for dementia associated with DS needs to be developed.

I hope that you have a wonderful spring in South Carolina, and that you take the time to stop to see the wonders of spring blooming that has already started in our beautiful state!

Warmly,
Lotta Granholm
SC Access, a program through the Lieutenant Governor’s Office on Aging, is designed to be a “one-stop” source of information about services and resources for older adults, persons with disabilities, their caregivers, families, and professionals. The purpose of SC Access is to provide constituents with the resources to make good, informed decisions that enable them to live as independently as possible.

SC Access is a free web-based resource to make it easier for multiple populations to utilize its benefits. The website, www.scaccesshelp.org, offers a searchable database with over 13,000 programs and services. This database is designed to help one identify the services they may need and to find the agencies or companies that provide those services. The SC Access database can be searched in multiple ways to include: county, keywords, service names and more. There is also a “Search By Needs” function that can help individuals find services by choosing statements that best fit their needs. One of the main goals of SC Access is to provide as much information to the constituent as possible. Each profile not only lists the name and address of the business, but also includes information such as eligibility requirements, intake procedures, insurances accepted, descriptions of services and more!

For those who may need additional guidance, Information and Referral (I&R) Specialists are located around the state in Aging and Disability Resource Centers. These I&R Specialists can help guide one through finding the services needed and make referrals to the appropriate providers. They can also help explain eligibility for services and assist with long-term care planning. To be connected to your local Information and Referral Specialist contact the Lieutenant Governor’s Office on Aging at (800) 868-9095.

Other components on the SC Access website offer additional resources. Learn About is an educational area with 17 topics of interest ranging from Caregiving and Respite to Planning for Long-Term Care. Each topic contains articles, fact sheets, checklists and other helpful websites where one can “learn about” other helpful information. SC Access also maintains a calendar of community, state, and national events related to aging and disability topics such as trainings, workshops, health fairs, etc.

Presentations and training regarding SC Access and other services offered through the Lieutenant Governor’s Office on Aging are available. To schedule an event or to learn more, please call (800) 868-9095.
Dr. Granholm was interviewed in January by the Alzheimer Research Forum to discuss her thoughts on a recent trial that proved to be a disappointing turn for **Down's syndrome (DS) research**. The study unfortunately showed no effectiveness in potential cognitive benefits of the drug memantine, already used as a treatment in Alzheimer’s disease. The following are excerpts from the article:

“Since Alzheimer’s disease is common in older people with Down’s syndrome—present in half of those who reach the age of 60—and people with DS are living much longer than they used to, the need for a treatment for AD in this population is increasing. Researchers have long thought that treatments for Alzheimer’s would work in people with DS, since some neuropathological features including, accumulation of amyloid-β deposits (see recent ARF Webinar), are similar between the two groups.

However, the door may still be open for further investigation into memantine for DS, said Lon Schneider, University of Southern California Keck School of Medicine. The current small, heterogeneous sample (some of whom did not have dementia) gave the study only enough statistical power to pick up a moderate to large effect, he said. It failed to find one, but “that doesn’t mean there can’t be a small effect,” said Schneider.’

Lotta Granholm-Bentley, Medical University of South Carolina, agreed that the heterogeneity of the subject pool may have influenced the results. “The fact that they included individuals without Alzheimer’s disease made me think this would not work,” she said. Several studies have shown that memantine has no effect in mild stages of AD (see ARF related news story on Schneider et al., 2011). If the study had enrolled only those with dementia, the outcome might have been different, she said. “I definitely think that it warrants further study.”

To read the complete article, go to www.AlzForum.org and search: **Memantine Strikes Out in Down’s Syndrome.**
Third Annual “The State of Seniors in the Lowcountry”

Organized by the Lowcountry Senior Network and the SC Aging in Place Coalition, this forum presented updates on many key issues that are facing South Carolina’s aging population. The event was held on Tuesday, February 14th at the Charleston Southern University’s Lightsey Chapel.

The first guest speaker was Denise Rivers, Deputy Director of the Lieutenant Governor’s Office on Aging, who presented an update with numerous startling statistics about the cost of aging in SC. “The range of aging services – home-delivered meals, personal care, adult day services, etc. - that help seniors remain in their home costs less than $1,000 dollars per individual per year. In contrast, persons in Medicaid-paid nursing home beds cost taxpayers anywhere from $25,000 to $37,000 per year. Private pay is about $65,000 per year. About a third of nursing home residents pay all of their nursing home costs from their own funds.” Ms. Rivers encourages the public to put pressure on state policy makers to redefine the way long-term social services are financed and delivered and redirect funds towards Home and Community Based Services instead of institutional services.

Next we heard from, Stephanie Blunt, the Executive Director of the Trident Area Agency on Aging. TIAA fields calls daily from Lowcountry seniors in need of Home and Community Based Services, so they have first-hand knowledge about the kinds of challenges that our seniors are facing. Last year they were able to serve over 3,700 individuals with services such as personal care, transportation, meals, home services, legal assistance, or anything else that may be required. However, despite all of the citizens that were able to benefit from the services, there are still 1,000 people on the waiting list for assistance, due to budget constraints. Ms. Blunt set out a call to action to advocate for Home and Community Based Services for our seniors and emphasize the value that many of these services provide, particularly in terms of prevention. Spending a little on simple things, like installing hand rails in the home or providing transportation to routine doctor visits, can save exponentially down the road. One way we can support these programs is by encouraging our legislators to reauthorize the Older Americans Act with the amendment that allows funds to be itemized for state-specific needs.

The final speaker on the panel was, Theresa Arnold, the Associate State Director for Advocacy with the AARP. Arnold is involved in several grass roots campaigns throughout the state to promote Home and Community Based Services. Programs such as the Driver Safety Program lowers insurance rates for seniors who successfully complete it and the Tax Aid Program helps individuals take full advantage of South Carolina’s low tax burdens for seniors. A new “Scorecard” system has also been implemented to allow states to assess how effective they are in meeting the needs for state long-term services and supports. Currently, South Carolina is ranked 38th overall in the country, based on factors of affordability and access, choice of setting and provider, quality of life and care, and support for family caregivers.

Obviously, there is much room for improvement in our state’s long-term services and supports, most notably in the categories of choice of setting and provider and support for family caregivers. The purpose of this ranking is to help improve the performance of these systems so that older people and adults with disabilities in all states can exercise choice and control over their lives, thereby maximizing their independence and well-being. The full report is available at: www.longtermscorecard.org.
Interested in learning more about how you can contribute to the ongoing research of neurological disorders, such as Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s diseases?

Contact the MUSC Brain Bank Coordinator, Nicholas Gregory at 843.792.7867 or gregoryn@musc.edu

Think it is only important to become a brain donor if you have been diagnosed with a neurological disorder?

THINK AGAIN!

In order to perform research on brains that have been affected by diseases, such as Parkinson’s or Alzheimer’s, scientists must be able to compare them against “normal” age-matched tissue. In addition, it is also important to study changes in the brain that occur with healthy aging.

In Other Words:

“I believe very strongly in the advance of any scientific endeavor; particularly anything that may assist in solving the mysteries of aging and associated dementia-related conditions which cause so much sadness and suffering.

Since, I will some day no longer need the use of my brain, if it can help in the advance of aging and other research, I wish to make it available for that purpose. Also, in some way, it may help in leading to a very small piece of personal immortality. Besides, it costs me nothing.

I would encourage others to consider donating theirs as well.”

- David Fleshman, Registered Donor

Brain Bank to partner with LifePoint!

Certified by the federal government, LifePoint is the designated Organ Procurement Organization (OPO) for organ recovery services in South Carolina, excepting Aiken and Edgefield counties. LifePoint actively provides organ, tissue and ocular donor services to 62 hospitals throughout the state.

As of this spring, LifePoint’s trained donation coordinators will be educating donor families about MUSC’s brain donation program as another opportunity to leave behind a gift that has the potential to affect countless lives.

Find MUSC Neurosciences on Facebook to learn about the great research and education happening in the department!

www.musc.edu/brainbank

Contact the MUSC Brain Bank Coordinator, Nicholas Gregory at 843.792.7867 or gregoryn@musc.edu
Toby Clark
Senior Mentor

“We moved to Charleston from Chicago when I retired from the University of Illinois at Chicago in 2000. My wife’s family came to Charleston in the 1770’s and she had lived here prior to coming to Chicago in the late 1990’s. So as a boater I wanted to be close to the water and we both enjoy history; her hobby is genealogy and she greatly favored Charleston over the Florida area. I also want to be close to an academic medical center for health care as we both have a unique set of health issues; MUSC is perfect for us in that regard.

In addition to wonderful wife of 12 years; I have a son who is 44 and lives in California with his wife. David is a Ph. D. (organic chemistry) Cal grad and stayed in the area which he loves very much. I also have a daughter who is 42 and she and her husband live in Ohio with their two children Emily 10 and Andrew 8. Those wonderful grandkids love the Charleston area as well boating and outdoor activities.

I am fortunate to have grown up in a small town in northeast Indiana with my father being a pharmacist and a great coach/mentor. Undergraduate pharmacy school was in Ohio, a hospital pharmacy residency in Michigan and then graduate school in Detroit in the late 1960’s. I became involved in hospital pharmacy management and have served as Assistant Pharmacy Director then Pharmacy Director in several academic medical centers for over 35 years. In the 1990’s my career took me to serving the University of Illinois at Chicago as the Administrator of the UIC Eye and Ear Institute for several years. In addition I have been a faculty member in a college of pharmacy since 1972 and am proud of my affiliation with South Carolina College of Pharmacy (MUSC Campus) and with the pharmacy services at MUSC as a consultant to the Pharmacy Director of the pharmacy residency programs. For the past eleven years I have served as a Lead Surveyor for post doctoral hospital pharmacy residency programs with the American Society of Health System Pharmacist’s Commission on Credentialing. This experience has taken me to over 90% of the academic medical centers in the US.

I really enjoy working with young aspiring students and pharmacy residents at MUSC and other medical centers. The development of young person’s into productive and giving professionals is very satisfying to me. In addition to my professional interests I also enjoy giving back as a part of my church and the Boy Scouts as well. Working and motoring on my boat is also a strong interest. It is a fun time to go down the ICW south, anchor out in Church Creek or the South Edisto for a few days. I pretend I am in the South Sea’s. Boat trips like this to Florida or north to the Chesapeake are relaxing and give me time to read mystery novels.

In my mind being a mentor is part of the give back to help students learn new skills and work with real patients. I have a lot of health issues and as I grow older I am sure we need more physicians who have empathy towards older people. My great internist at MUSC is such a wonderful example for the students. I asked him about the program and he encouraged me to volunteer.

The students have been a kind and considerate to work with. They are cautious yet very inquisitive which is what I would expect. I am sure that over the next few years I will see them grow and expand their skills. My only advice to the students is continue to ask questions to older persons about their feelings and experiences.”

“The object of education is to prepare the young to educate themselves throughout their lives.”
- Robert M. Hutchins
Matt Low
1st Year Medical Student

“I am from Lexington, SC. I graduated from Wofford College in Spartanburg, SC in 2009 with a BS in biology and BA in Spanish. I also have a Masters certificate from USC School of Medicine. I have grown up around healthcare my entire because my dad was in medical sales, my mother is the director of nursing for the heart hospital at Palmetto Health Richland, and I also worked at Palmetto Health Richland. My grandmother died of progressive supranuclear palsy and the intricacies of that disease and her fight led me to medicine. I have 3 passions in life, Jesus, medicine and Spanish. I want to combine all three and truly care for and love on people. I am just following my passions. My end goal is cardiothoracic surgery but if it changes along the way, I am completely open. I have seen a lot of surgery and I chose that field because I know it is the one thing that I can do, day in and day out, and never grow bored with it. It is absolutely fascinating to me and just something I love. Every time I try to look for something new, that little voice always points me back to surgery.

The most valuable thing I have learned so far from my mentor is that just because someone's age increases, life doesn't have to decrease. There may be some physical limitations, but your attitude and mentality are the only true limitations. Toby just reminds me how much I can learn from treating older patients. Toby genuinely cares about me learning what I need to learn to be the best doctor I can be. He is always offering ways that I can be better. I just appreciate the honest yet gentle, non condescending advice he gives. My advice to others is to just listen. We have our assignments but never get so caught up in a checklist that you miss the wisdom, knowledge, and the lessons your mentor has to offer.

Lee Cumbee
1st Year Medical Student

“I'm from Awendaw, SC and attended College of Charleston for my BS in Biochemistry, BA in Chemistry. I have wanted to go into medicine ever since high school. I took several medical based courses, such as sports medicine and anatomy and physiology, and I loved them. Those classes really peaked my interest in medicine, but what really pushed me over the edge was shadow day my senior year. I shadowed a family friend who is an orthopedic surgeon and from then on I was hooked. Ever since that first shadowing experience, I have always wanted to do orthopedics. I have always thought orthopedic surgery was fascinating and the more I learn about it/get exposed to it, the more interested I become.

The most valuable thing I have learned from Mr. Clark is that just because society has labeled someone as a “senior citizen,” doesn't necessarily mean that they are any less active. Mr. Clark has got to be one of the more active individuals I know. He explained to us that he still loves to take walks downtown, ride his bike, and work on his boat, among other things.

My time with Mr. Clark has made me realize that “older patients” may have different problems/complaints than some other patients, but they are very interesting people with very interesting lives and are enjoyable to be around. If you want to make the most of the Senior Mentor Program, you need to go into it with the right attitude. The program is not just another thing that you need to get done, but it really is an important part of learning how to care for all patients. Your mentor chose to take part in this program and they are very helpful and really just fun to be around. So far, we have only had two interactions with Mr. Clark, but I am very excited to continue to get in the program.
**CENTER on AGING STAFF**

**Lotta Granholm-Bentley, DDS, PhD** - Director, Center on Aging; Co-Director, Carroll A. Campbell, Jr. Neuropathology Laboratory
granholm@musc.edu

**David Bachman, MD** - Co-Director, Center on Aging
bachmadl@musc.edu

**Nyssa Sturbin** - Business Manager
sturbin@musc.edu
843.792.5678

**Kathleen Wiley, MD** - Director, Senior Mentor Program
wileyk@musc.edu
843.792.3699

**Rebekah Hardin, MHA** - Education Coordinator
Development, Carroll A. Campbell, Jr. Neuropathology Laboratory
hardinr@musc.edu
843.792.8872

**Nicholas Gregory** - Brain Donation Coordinator
gregoryn@musc.edu
843.792.8872

**Kelly Dillon** - Program Assistant
dillonk@musc.edu
843.792.0712

---

**Senior Mentors of 4th Year students:**

Don’t forget to RSVP to the Graduation Luncheon.

We look forward to celebrating with you and your students!

---

office: 843.792.0712  fax: 843.792.0679  www.musc.edu/aging