

MYASTHENIA GRAVIS
FOUNDATION OF AMERICA, INC.

foundation focus

news about myasthenia gravis
for patients, family and friends

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calendar

**MGFA National
Board of Directors Meeting**
January 19, 2008
Tampa, Florida

**Myasthenia Gravis Foundation of
America, Inc. Annual Meeting**
June 12-14, 2008
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

MG Awareness Month
"Together We Are Stronger"
June 2008

Thank you

**...to all of our
wonderful
donors!**

*Your generosity
brings us closer to a
world without MG.*

winter 2007

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Message from Chairman Sam Schulhof

With the holiday season upon us, I want to take this opportunity to thank you, the members of MGFA, for all you have done, all you do, and all you will do in continuing to meet the evolving needs of our community.

We are an organization engaged in continuous change—looking to the future and learning from the past. We are re-assessing what we do, how we do it, and its value to you, the MG patient community, families, and caregivers.

We are financially stronger than we have ever been for many reasons—some due to the application of sound business practices, some to old-fashioned discipline and accountability, some to generous donations from our members, and some to the foresight of members who included MGFA in their estate planning.

The Foundation is committed to investing your money responsibly. We have asked

the Medical/Scientific Advisory Board (M/SAB) and Nurses Advisory Board (NAB) to help us track and evaluate the return on investment of our research efforts. We understand the need to communicate the value and progress made for the dollars spent if we expect other people and organizations to invest in us and our research efforts.

We have also asked the M/SAB and NAB to develop a strategic research agenda that will continue to evolve as our knowledge expands and progress is made. The agenda will focus on identifying and understanding the causes of MG, improving diagnostic techniques and treatments, and organizing and developing structural constructs such as “Centers of Excellence.” We have asked that proposals be solicited that clearly identify leveraging and partnership opportunities in terms of

both dollars and related research, with the ultimate goal of finding a cure.

We recognize the need to communicate with you what has been accomplished and what needs to be done. We will strive to keep you informed on a regular basis of advances in understanding the causes of MG as well as development in diagnostic techniques and treatments, and in progress towards a cure.

In the final analysis, it is ultimately about commitment. Organizations that succeed in meeting the ever-changing needs of their members have more than hopes and a vision; they have committed members who give more than they take. We look forward to working with you in our journey along the continuum of change. With commitment from everyone, “Together, We Are Stronger!” ■

Reflections on Dr. John Newsom-Davis

by Robert Pascuzzi, MD, Member, MGFA
Medical/Scientific Advisory Board

We are all saddened by the tragedy of losing Dr. Newsom-Davis, and these somber thoughts will not leave us for a very long time. His impact on the understanding of myasthenia gravis and on the care that we currently deliver to patients cannot be quantified. Dr. Newsom-Davis' leadership was characterized by integrity, honesty, and kindness, and, in my opinion, there is no single individual over the past 25 years who has done more to further our understanding of MG and related disorders—and no individual who has had a greater influence on the field (research and also clinical work)—than Dr. Newsom-Davis. I think he has done as much for my generation as those remarkable leaders, Drs. Viets and Osserman, did for prior generations.

My own first encounter with Dr. Newsom-Davis was during an MG meeting in the early 1980s. At the time, I was a resident in training and thought that I knew quite a lot—when in fact I knew very little. While listening to Dr. Newsom-Davis discuss management of patients, I was struck

MGFA mourns the passing of Dr. John Newsom-Davis



It is with great sadness that we inform the MGFA community that John Newsom-Davis, MD of London, England, long-time researcher, advocate for myasthenia gravis, and retired Professor of Clinical Neurology at Oxford University, died suddenly on August 24, 2007 in a car accident while on holiday in Romania. Medical/Scientific Advisory Board (M/SAB) member Dr. Newsom-Davis was in the process of recruiting people for an international thymectomy trial.

by his clarity of thought, immense logic, remarkable organization, and mesmerizing ability to communicate. Everyone in the room gave Dr. Newsom-Davis his or her complete attention as he softly and politely explained the issues. He made everyone think more thoroughly about the problem at hand. Following the presentation, I caught him in the hallway and posed a question about MG, one that everyone would have to say was pretty naïve. Instead of ignoring the question or indicating that I would be well-served to change professions, Dr. Newsom-Davis looked me politely in the eyes and calmly and reassuringly answered my question. He took his time teaching me the correct facts on my own level, while heightening

my understanding of the matter and encouraging me to stick with it.

Over the decades, when John Newsom-Davis spoke, everyone else would listen. When Dr. Newsom-Davis would request something, we would always give our very best effort. He had a wonderful ability to bring out the best in others. He encouraged us to work harder and better, and to do so with integrity, honesty, and kindness. In the medical field, when we speak of professionalism, we talk about role models. There is a great wealth of wonderful people in the field, but I cannot think of an individual who embodies the concept of role model better than John Newsom-Davis. I learned at the 1980s meeting that I could never approach

his brilliance and talent, but I did hope for a little bit of his professionalism and kindness to rub off on me.

In honor of this wonderful person who has affected so many of us in such a positive way, the Medical/Scientific Advisory Board recommended and the MGFA board of directors approved the establishment of the John Newsom-Davis Award for Neurologists-in-Training to foster the involvement of young physicians in the study of myasthenia gravis and advance the care of MG patients. The M/SAB feels the award should be available to both residents and fellows and open to both national and international applicants. The award (up to \$5,000) would be granted to neurology residents in training who meet specific criteria. The funds will allow young physicians-in-training to attend professional meetings and broaden their exposure to the field. Additional considerations include support for the development of research activity, educational programming, or enhanced clinical service in the institution or region of the recipient. Such a program would allow for us to reach out and connect with residents and fellows-in-training

and, hopefully, influence their career decisions regarding MG and research.

Dr. Newsom-Davis was a consistent advocate for young investigators; therefore, it is fitting that this award be named in his honor. The award will keep his name in our thoughts and serve to introduce the next generation of clinicians and investigators to this remarkable man. As stories of John Newsom-Davis

are relayed to these young physicians, we know that he would be pleased with their attraction and dedication to the field. Whether it is in research or in the care of patients, we hope they continue his legacy, acting always with integrity, honesty, and, of course, his kindness. We miss you, John. ■

John Newsom-Davis Award for residents-in-training established

In recognition of the significant contributions that Dr. Newsom-Davis has made to those with myasthenia gravis and the inspiration he has provided to a generation of physicians and scientists, MGFA has established the John Newsom-Davis Award for Residents-in-Training. The fund will provide annual awards for neurology residents-in-training to foster the involvement of young physicians in the study of myasthenia gravis and advancing the care of patients.

Contributions may be sent to:

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Ask the doctor

by Robert Ruff, MD, PhD, *Member, MGFA Medical/Scientific Advisory Board*

Is it OK for MG patients to get a flu shot?

Concerns about vaccinations and MG sometimes arise out of fears that vaccinations will trigger attacks of MG or worsen its course. There is no evidence to indicate that receiving yearly flu shots will worsen the course of MG. Another concern is that people who are taking medications that compromise

People with chronic diseases (such as MG) and people who have difficulty breathing (a possible symptom of MG) are especially susceptible to harm caused by influenza.

The influenza vaccine is the most effective way to protect against the disease and to prevent the severe complications of influenza. Each year, the vaccine is made up of inactivated components of the different strains of influenza virus

response to the vaccination that enables the body to defend against influenza infection. A person who develops a mild reaction to the flu shot would likely have a much more severe illness if he or she contracted influenza. Vaccination can also prevent family members infecting each other with influenza.

Please note: As with all medications, please consult your physician before getting a flu shot!

There are some people who should not receive yearly influenza shots. People who have allergic sensitivity to eggs or who have had severe reactions to prior influenza shots should not receive flu shots.

There is an alternative form of influenza vaccination that uses live attenuated influenza virus that is administered as a nasal spray. The live virus nasal spray form of influenza vaccine should not be used in people with MG.

For additional information on the influenza, pneumonia, and tetanus shots, go to www.myasthenia.org. ■

People with chronic diseases (such as MG) and people who have difficulty breathing (a possible symptom of MG) are especially susceptible to harm caused by influenza.

their immune systems (such as steroids, prednisone, or prednisolone) will contract the disease they are being vaccinated against. However, the agents in the injected influenza vaccinations are inactive and therefore cannot produce disease.

Influenza season begins in the fall and extends through the winter. Influenza causes substantial illness and can be fatal.

that are likely to be causing disease that flu season. Some people do not want to get influenza vaccinations because, in the past, they received a vaccination and they had a low-grade fever and felt ill for a few days. Hence, some people do not want to receive a flu shot because they believe that the “flu shot gave them the flu.” However, the low-grade fever is part of the body’s

The International Conference: more than a scientific meeting

by Robert Pascuzzi, MD

Let me ask the interested reader of this newsletter: "What was the most important event in MG research in the last five years?"

Actually, there have been many important research studies and discoveries during this time, but no single observation or report can approach the impact of the **11th International Conference on MG and Related Disorders** held last May in Chicago, Illinois. The conference was co-sponsored by the Myasthenia Gravis Foundation of America, Inc. and the New York Academy of Sciences. Led by M/SAB members Dr. Richard Barohn and Dr. Henry Kaminski, the conference impressed patients, family members, and the medical community alike with the ability to bring everyone with a meaningful MG research interest into one town for a three-day discussion on remarkable new observations and ideas. The outcome of such a scholarly exchange is the insight, novel and creative thinking, and fuel that produce the best research possible for making progress in understanding myasthenia gravis. The importance and impact of this meeting cannot be overstated.

Let us turn back the clock to the original International Conference. The 1st International Symposium on MG was a

direct result of the efforts of MGFA and its Medical/Scientific Advisory Board. MGFA chose to establish such a symposium for the purpose of "fostering, coordinating, and supporting research into the cause, prevention, alleviation, and cure of MG." The initial meeting was on December 8-9, 1954 at the Medical School at The University of Pennsylvania, the home institution of Dr. George Gammon, who served as a charter member of the Medical/Scientific Advisory Board of MGFA. The meeting was organized and presided over by Dr. Henry Viets, who was the initial chair of the Medical/Scientific Advisory Board. The goals of the meeting were stated as "to review current research, summarize current concepts of neuromuscular transmission, and discuss directions of future therapy," and the meeting represented a truly international collaboration of experts.

The unique value of the meeting was recognized by Dr. Viets, who published the various papers from the presentations in *The American Journal of Medicine* (1955). There were 18 articles and 85 pages covering structure, neuromuscular transmission, pharmacology, electromyography (EMG), thymus, pregnancy, endocrine, cholinesterase inhibitors (CEI), and crisis as major topics.

In his introduction and summary comments from the meeting, Dr. Viets wrote (1954): "...mortality reduced to 10-15% by modern therapy"; "Eaton's (Mayo) analysis appears to confirm the benefit of thymectomy reported by the Boston group"; and "Skeptics like Grob are still unwilling to concede that thymectomy is any more than a continuing experiment."

The 2nd International Symposium occurred five years later in Los Angeles, once again under the direction of Dr. Viets. The proceedings were published as a single volume by Charles C Thomas Publishers and contained 40 chapters and 650 pages.

For clinicians with a vested interest in state of the art regarding MG research, the International Conference has served over the years as far more than a meeting. The published proceeding from the 11th International Conference should be available in the spring of 2008 as a publication of the New York Academy of Sciences. This document will serve as a great wealth of information and insight, and as a treasure-trove of possibilities for new treatment strategies over the next five years. ■

2007 Scientific Session of the Myasthenia Gravis Foundation

by Robert L. Ruff, MD, PhD

The annual Scientific Session of the Myasthenia Gravis Foundation of America, Inc. was held on October 6, 2007 in Washington, DC at the Wardman Park Marriott Hotel. The session was organized by Drs. Matthew N. Meriggioli and Gil Wolfe and included several presentations from recipients of MGFA's Student and Post-Doctoral fellowships.

There were nine presentations from around the world, many of which related to clinical treatment studies and included discussion of the ongoing international clinical trial on thymectomy.

Presentations included:

- The role of the immune system in MG
- Triggering the immune response in myasthenia gravis

- Distinct roles of dendritic cell and B cell-mediated *in vivo* antigen presentation to autoreactive CD4+ T cells in experimental autoimmune myasthenia gravis
- Immunoregulation of experimental myasthenia gravis
- Myasthenia gravis triggered by statins: presentation of 11 cases
- Thymomatous MG: paraneoplastic dysautonomia and small fiber neuropathy
- Mycophenolate mofetil in MG: it's not the end of the road yet!
- Mycophenolate treatment for myasthenia gravis
- Myasthenia gravis with muscle specific tyrosine kinase (MuSK)

receptor antibodies treated with rituximab: two case reports

- MG thymectomy recruitment in a surgical clinical trial

At the end of the scientific session, Dr. Donald B. Sanders provided a memorial tribute to Dr. John Newsom-Davis, who recently died in a motor vehicle accident while traveling in Romania, where he was investigating another study site for the thymectomy trial. Dr. Newsom-Davis was an enormous contributor to MG clinical treatment and related research.

A complete summary of the 2007 MGFA Scientific Session is available online at www.myasthenia.org/mgprogram_scientificsession.cfm or by calling the national office at 800-541-5454. ■

Great things are happening: Highlights of recent and upcoming chapter events

The Foundation remains vibrant and active, as always, at both the national and local levels. We are able to help people living with MG in so many different ways, thanks to the inexhaustible efforts of our local chapters. The following are chapter highlights from across the country. If you are not already a member of one of our local chapters, please contact the national office at 1-800-541-5454 or visit our Web site, www.myasthenia.org, for more information.

Our **Northwest Texas Chapter** has been aggressively expanding their patient support activities by encouraging new support groups throughout the state of Texas. Over the past year, they have helped develop support groups in San Antonio, El Paso, Austin, Abilene, and Pasadena, all while maintaining their current bi-monthly support group meeting in the Lubbock, Texas area.

Our **Garden State Chapter** had a very busy summer. In May, they celebrated their 10th Annual MG Walk, raising more than \$26,000! The event was covered in several local newspapers as well as the leading radio station in the New York area. In August, they held their 15th Annual MG Golf Outing, and September saw their 7th Annual Sit-a-Thon, with more than 100 participants.

Our **Metro New York Chapter** was also very active throughout this past summer, holding their annual MG Awareness Walk on Long Island in June and their annual MG Fishing Trip on the Atlantic in July. Also in July, they participated in "The Best of Westchester," an annual event sponsored by *Westchester Magazine*. The event honors local businesses chosen by their readers as "the best" in Westchester County. They also have a charity beneficiary each year, and this year it was our own Metro New York

The Best of Westchester



Chapter! Through this event, the chapter raised almost \$5,000 and was able to educate a wide audience about MG.

This past September, our **Minnesota Chapter** celebrated its 35th Anniversary! To celebrate this momentous occasion, the chapter held a highly successful educational and fundraising meeting in the Twin Cities area. The event included presentations from Dr. Brian Crum of the Mayo Clinic, Dr. Suraj Muley of the University of Minnesota, and MG patient and nurse Julie Jukich, RN, BSN. Additionally, a special donation of \$5,000 by Millie and Lianne Anderson was made in memory of Irv Anderson (long-time supporter of MGFA) as seed money to establish an endowment for the support of the Minnesota Chapter.

In 2008, the **Minnesota Chapter** is teaming up with our **Greater Florida Chapter** and the national office to sponsor a booth at the 75th Annual Meeting of the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA) to be held August 9th through the 13th, 2008, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This activity is a part of MGFA's efforts to continually educate healthcare practitioners about the complexities of myasthenia gravis.

Our **Greater Florida Chapter** (formerly the South Florida Gold Coast, East Central Florida, and the West Central Florida Chapters) is also hosting "Anchors Aweigh with MGFA" aboard the Carnival Cruise Lines ship *Sensation* on May 15-18, 2008. The cruise will include educational presentations by MGFA Medical/Scientific Advisory Board members Allan S. Weiss, MD (2006 MGFA Doctor of the Year and practicing clinician with St. Petersburg Neurology Clinic in St. Petersburg, FL), Dr. Julie Rowin (Assistant Professor and Director of the EMG Lab at the University of Illinois at Chicago), and Dr. Matthew Meriggioli (Assistant Professor and Director of the Neuromuscular Division at the University of Illinois at Chicago). The cruise, which is the first of its kind within MGFA, should prove to be a great opportunity for people living with MG to network, learn about the disease, and have tons of fun.

On Saturday, September 29th, the **Myasthenia Gravis Association of Greater Kansas City** held their 16th Annual Benefit/Auction, "How the West

Was Won," at a local ranch. 145 guests attended to bid on silent and live auction items, ride a mechanical calf-roping bull, and square-dance the night away!



Donald Aaron and Charles Gail,
Myasthenia Gravis Association of
Greater Kansas City

The **Wisconsin Chapter** celebrated its annual Pancake Breakfast on Sunday, September 30th, 2007. Attendees enjoyed an endless supply of pancakes while bidding on the silent auction. A caricaturist provided cartoons and laughter as friends of MG gathered for the largest fundraising event for MG in Wisconsin. ■

Make a gift to MGFA

Visit www.myasthenia.org and click on "How can I help." You can make a donation by using the Acceptiva™ secure payments process or by sending in a check (make checks payable to Myasthenia Gravis Foundation of America, Inc.). Other ways that you can support MGFA and its mission financially can be found by selecting "Planned Giving."

Your dollars will help support medical research about myasthenia gravis, provide printed material to those struggling with myasthenia gravis, keep the lights on in the home office, and so much more.

Your gift is tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law. **Thank you for your support!**

Across the country: calendar of MGFA chapters events

The following is a selection of local MGFA chapter events and activities. For a full listing of activities taking place in your area, please contact your local chapter. To find the location nearest you, please call 1-800-541-5454 or visit www.myasthenia.org and click on MGFA Local Chapters.

Florida

May 15-18, 2008 – *Anchors Aweigh with MGFA!* Three-day cruise, leaves from Port Canaveral, FL. For more information, contact the Greater Florida Chapter at 727-596-1491 or 877-596-1491.

New Jersey

May 10, 2008 – Garden State Chapter's 11th Annual MG Walk-A-Thon, Packanack Lake, Wayne, NJ

August 2008 – Garden State Chapter's 16th Annual MG Golf Outing, Crestmont Country Club, West Orange, NJ

For more information on these events, please contact our Garden State Chapter by phone at 973-835-4444 or 800-437-4949, or by e-mail at mgnj@mgnj.org.

New York

December 1 & 13, 2007 – Border's Gift Wrapping MG Fundraiser, Stony Brook, NY

April 2008 – Metro New York Chapter's Annual Meeting, New York, NY

April 2008 – MG Walk-a-Thon, hosted by the Metro New York Chapter, New York, NY

For more information on these events, please contact our Metro New York Chapter at 516-538-0738 or MetroNY@myasthenia.org.

Oklahoma

March 9, 2008, 2:00 pm - Oklahoma Chapter's Annual Meeting, Tulsa, OK

For more information, contact the Oklahoma Chapter at 918-494-4951.

Wisconsin

June 14, 2008 – *Float Away with MGFA!* Wisconsin Chapter's 50th Anniversary Celebration Dinner Cruise, Milwaukee, WI

For more information, contact the Wisconsin Chapter at 262-938-9800 or wisconsin@myasthenia.org.

Advocacy update

by Janet A. Myder

The goal

MGFA has always been a strong voice on behalf of individuals who have MG by advocating for the advancement of knowledge, research, and treatment of the disease. MGFA wants to make our collective voice even stronger and is committed to enhancing advocacy activities by developing a distinct, targeted program. Recently, the board of directors set goals to establish a strategy to empower MGFA members across the nation.

Definition

What is advocacy? Definitions vary and are unique to each organization or individual. Most definitions convey "doing something for a cause." Advocacy occurs on many levels, including individual, organizational, local, state, and national. For example, the Foundation supports federal legislation to fund research through coalitions with other national autoimmune groups; MGFA chapters solicit June Awareness Month proclamations from mayors or governors, who in turn become advocates; and individual patients promote public education by writing about MG in letters to editors.

What we do now

Currently, MGFA continues its national-level advocacy, including collaboration

with organizations such as the National Health Council (NHC), American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association (AARDA), and National Institutes of Health (NIH). NHC activities have been prominent since publication of the summer *Foundation Focus*. In September, the NHC hosted an event in New Hampshire to draw 2008 presidential candidates' attention to the lack of health and long-term care (LTC) insurance coverage—a particularly important issue

How MGFA defines advocacy will help to determine the program's objectives and methods for achieving them. The Communications Committee, charged with taking initial steps to develop the program, will recommend a definition of MGFA advocacy and has asked chapter leaders for their assistance.

Other news

Drug safety and access—a top legislative priority for the NHC and its member

Advocacy occurs on many levels, including individual, organizational, local, state, and national.

for many people with chronic diseases or disability. Janet Golden, MGFA Chief Executive, was one of 48 NHC member CEOs who signed a statement asking candidates for solutions that would guarantee effective and affordable health and LTC coverage for all Americans.

Improvements

MGFA aims to implement an advocacy program that is coordinated between national and chapter levels and focuses resources and activities to assure effectiveness. Such a program needs to be based on a clear set of objectives.

organizations this year—came to fruition when President Bush signed the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) reauthorization bill (H.R. 3580) into law on September 27. The law expands FDA's monitoring authority over drug development and testing to include surveillance of drugs in the marketplace. The law also mandates needed safety requirements without unduly restricting access to new drugs or slowing the approval process for potentially life-saving drugs. These provisions are particularly significant for patients with chronic illnesses such as MG. ■

Medical/Scientific Advisory Board update

At its October 2007 meeting, the Medical/Scientific Advisory Board (M/SAB) elected the following officers:

- Chair: **Richard Barohn, MD**, University of Kansas Medical Center
- Vice Chair: **Henry Kaminski, MD**, Chair of the Department of Neurology, St. Louis University School of Medicine
- Secretary: **Gil Wolfe, MD**, Dr. Bob and Jean Smith Foundation Distinguished Chair, Professor of Neurology, University of Texas Southwest Medical Center
- Assistant Secretary: **Matthew Meriglioli, MD**, Assistant Professor and Director, Neuromuscular Program University of Illinois at Chicago

A sincere thank you for the excellent leadership of **Robert Pascuzzi, MD**, Indiana University School of Medicine, for his past two years of service as M/SAB chair.

The Research and Grants Committee is comprised of:

- **Matthew Meriglioli, MD** (Chairman), Assistant Professor and Director, Neuromuscular Program University of Illinois at Chicago

- **Gil Wolfe, MD**, Dr. Bob and Jean Smith Foundation Distinguished Chair Professor of Neurology, University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas
- **Angela Vincent, MD**, Head of Neuroimmunology at the University of Oxford
- **Henry Kaminski, MD**, Chair of the Department of Neurology, St. Louis University School of Medicine
- **John Kissel, MD**, Professor of Neurology, Ohio State University
- **Steven Vernino, MD**, Associate Professor of Neurology, University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas
- **Robert Ruff, MD**, Chief of the Neurology Service, Veterans Administration Medical Center, Ohio

A sincere thank you to former Research and Grants Committee members

Robert Lisak, MD (Michigan), **Daniel Drachman, MD** (Maryland), and **David Richman, MD** (California). ■

Nurses Advisory Board update

by Wilma Koopman, RN, *Assistant Professor of the School of Nursing at the University of Western Ontario, NAB Chair*

The Nurses Advisory Board (NAB) continues to support health care professionals, patients, families, and friends who are in contact with myasthenia gravis. Educational events occur across the continent. In Alabama, Arlene Stuckey and Anne Williams lead MG education and awareness at health fairs with an MG information booth, and at lectures and presentations at university nursing classes and in hospitals. Tamara Murphy has presented three times over the last year to nurses and patients, and continues to facilitate an MG support group at the Hershey Medical Centre. Marilyn Ricci facilitates the Jim L. Walker Arizona Chapter monthly support group during the fall and spring. These are just a few highlights of the many wonderful NAB activities occurring each year!

A \$5,000 Nursing Research Award is available through MGFA. Details on how to apply for this award can be found on the MGFA Web site, www.myasthenia.org.

Based on the response to last year's NAB program at the MGFA Annual Meeting, the NAB is planning an expanded educational program for patients and families at the 2008 MGFA Annual Meeting in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The NAB encourages all nurses involved with MG patients to become members of the Nurses Advisory Board and actively participate in its ongoing development. Contact the national office for details on how to apply for membership. ■

Dr. Charles Ochs

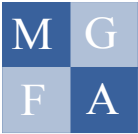
by Charles W. Breau, MD, *Treasurer, Alabama Chapter*

Dr. Charles Ochs, who served as vice president and president of the Alabama Chapter, died August 13, 2007 at the age of 74. He joined the Alabama Chapter of MGFA in 1991 and became president for six years beginning in 1992, then vice president for another two years. During his leadership, he was able to encourage several prominent businessmen, physicians, and nurses to join the board and take an active role in its operation. Although he was diagnosed with myasthenia gravis in 1990 and underwent a thymectomy, his wife says he had droopy eyelids as far back as 1970.

He was the lead author of a study entitled *Symptoms of Patients with Myasthenia Gravis Receiving Treatment*. He presented a preliminary report at MGFA's 1992 Scientific Session, with the final report published in the prestigious *Journal of Medicine* (Vol 29, pp1-12, 1998).

Dr. Ochs graduated from medical school at Tulane University in 1958, after which he spent 20 years in the Navy. During this time, he trained as a radiologist, and retired as Chief of Radiology at the Bethesda Naval Hospital. He then moved his family to Birmingham, Alabama, where he became Chief of Radiology until a second retirement at age 62. He had a passion for collecting pre-Columbian art and maps, many of which he donated to the local museum and library. His later years were spent in declining health, confining him to a nursing home, but he will be long remembered and missed. He is survived by his wife, Mary, of Mountain Brook, Alabama. He is also survived by his daughter, Diane Lanier, her husband, Monroe, and their two children. ■





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**MGFA is proud to be a member
of the following associations:**



NATIONAL
HEALTH COUNCIL™
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bbb.org/charity



Myasthenia gravis is an autoimmune neuromuscular disorder. Symptoms may include double vision, drooping eyelids, slurred speech, difficulty chewing and swallowing, weakness in arms and/or legs.

The MGFA mission is to facilitate the timely diagnosis and optimal care of individuals affected by myasthenia gravis and closely related disorders and to improve their lives through programs of patient services, public information, medical research, professional education, advocacy and patient care.

foundation
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Join us on our journey to find a cure

There are many ways in which you can contribute to the health of a nonprofit organization. Although monetary contributions are always needed and welcomed, you can also contribute through donations of your time and talent.

MGFA is seeking qualified individuals to be considered for nomination to the national board of directors. The board term is three (3) years, with four (4) meetings per year. All board members are asked to serve on at least one committee. Board meetings are held in various locations around the country, and committee meetings are conducted via conference call and e-mail. Board membership entails a commitment of 200 hours per year.

The nomination process begins on December 15, 2007 with completed applications submitted by March 10, 2008. Potential board members will be voted upon by the general membership at the MGFA Annual Meeting on June 12, 2008 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

For more information on how you or someone you know can get involved, please contact the national office at 1-800-541-5454 for a potential board member information packet. ■

Save the date!

2008 Annual Meeting
June 12-14, 2008

Hilton Milwaukee City Center
509 W Wisconsin Ave
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Details on reservations
and program registration
will be available shortly.