1991-04-19

Boston University School of Medicine news: April 19, 1991

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Boston University
School of Medicine

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April 19, 1991

Dear Member of the Media:

Researchers from Boston University School of Medicine (BUSM) will present abstracts on a variety of topics at the 43rd annual American Academy of Neurology Conference, held April 21-27 at the John B. Hynes Veterans Memorial Convention Center in Boston, Massachusetts. Here are brief descriptions of some of the presentations:

- "Sleep-Wake Cycle, Circadian Rhythm, and Parkinson's Disease"--Jeffrey E. Silver, a medical resident and Ph.D. candidate at BUSM, and Sanford H. Auerbach, M.D., an assistant professor of neurology and psychiatry at BUSM, will present findings of a study investigating how abnormal alterations in the circadian timing system and the sleep-wake cycle affect patients with Parkinson's disease (PD). Silver, Auerbach and their colleagues studied 20 subjects, some of whom had PD and some of whom did not. They found a desynchronization between the behavioral sleep time and the body's natural circadian rhythm in the PD patients. This may help to explain some sleep disturbances and behavioral problems in PD patients and help clinicians improve the daily functioning of these patients.

- "Neuropsychological Test Findings in the Syndrome of Mild Diffuse Axonal Injury: A Subtype of the Post-Concussional Syndrome"--Sanford H. Auerbach, M.D., an assistant professor of neurology and psychiatry at BUSM, will present the findings of a study that analyzed 30 patients with post-concussional syndrome (PCS)--a potentially disabling array of persistant symptoms, including memory and personality problems, headaches, dizziness and fatigue that follow minor head injury. Clinicians have long debated whether these neuropsychological changes are due to subtle brain damage or to psychological factors. In this study of PCS patients, Auerbach demonstrated that many of these conditions are not due to brain damage but to other neurological problems that may be overlooked. Auerbach says that recognizing the origins of these problems will have a major impact on the management and treatment of this disorder.

- "Precursors and Natural History of Parkinson's Disease: The Framingham Study"--Philip A. Wolf, M.D., a professor of neurology and epidemiology at BUSM, will present the findings of a study based on Framingham Heart study data over a 40-year period of the incidence and precursors of Parkinson's disease (PD). Among the 5,209 people observed in this study, 77 people developed PD. Wolf and his colleagues observed several common risk factors associated with the development of PD. They included professional occupations that were sedentary, older age, maleness and not smoking. However, the relationship between not smoking and PD was found for men only. This analysis offers a less distorted picture of the incidence and precursors of PD than previously known and will help physicians better identify the background and lifestyles of those who do develop PD.

- "Accuracy of Transcranial Doppler in Detecting Carotid Distribution Arterial Stenoses"--V.L. Babikian, M.D., an assistant professor of neurology at BUSM, will discuss a study that investigated the accuracy of the

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transcranial Doppler test as a method for determining whether a patient suffers from narrowing of cerebral blood vessels that could potentially lead to a stroke. The non-invasive test uses ultrasound to look into the skull and the major blood vessels at the base of the brain. Babikian and his colleagues found the test to be 93 percent as accurate for detecting constricted blood vessels as angiography, a more invasive and, therefore, more risky technique. The results indicate that the transcranial Doppler may be a good alternative to angiography in selected clinical situations.

- "Intracranial Hemodynamic Changes during Carotid Endarterectomy"--V.L. Babikian, M.D., an assistant professor of neurology at BUSM, will present the results of a study that analyzed carotid artery surgery performed on patients with narrowing cerebral blood vessels who are at risk of suffering from a stroke. Although the surgery is done to prevent the onset of a stroke, it is not without risk and can, in fact, often cause stroke. Babikian and his colleagues discovered that at the critical point during surgery, the blood flow is markedly decreased and that this drop in blood flow may be a contributing factor that causes stroke. These findings suggest that physicians may use a shunting method to prevent the drop in blood flow and, ultimately, make the surgery safer.

- "Education has no Effect on the Incidence of Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease in the Framingham Study"--Janice E. Knoefel, M.D., an assistant professor of neurology at BUSM, will discuss the findings of a study on the correlation between educational background and the incidence of dementia and Alzheimer's disease (AD). Knoefel and her colleagues screened subjects from the Framingham study to test for dementia. The educational background of those suffering from dementia were then compared to other individuals without dementia. The researchers found that educational background alone does not significantly increase the risk for dementia or AD. However, they did find a possible trend indicating that women with lower educational levels may have a slightly increased risk for dementia when compared to men.

Please contact me or Betty Russell at (617) 638-8491 for further information.

Sincerely,

Lisa Kushnir

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