

## WFN AD HOC COMMITTEE ON NEUROETHICS (A REPORT)

In London in 1999 the Council of Delegates of the WFN decided to form an ad hoc Committee on Neuroethics. Prof. F. Gerstenbrand, Vienna, Austria, was authorized to form the Committee as chairman. Prof. H. Baumgartner, Innsbruck, Austria, has accepted to act as secretary of the Committee.

Today, ethical considerations are increasingly important for both the practice of neurology and for neurological research. The process of globalization is sharply increasing awareness of both national and worldwide health problems. Dramatic progress in biology and medicine is challenging traditional ethical, legal, religious, cultural, and social values. Affluent societies are facing the burden of costly high-tech medicine, others are suffering from lack of the most basic medical resources. Some countries are struggling with difficult end-of-life decisions including medically assisted suicide and euthanasia, others with a low or even decreasing life expectancy. Although ethical problems may differ substantially among countries, others are similar worldwide. Recognizing the universal concepts of human rights and human dignity as a shared responsibility, the worldwide neurological community should address these ethical and medical problems in the field of neurology.

It is the mission of WFN to serve the worldwide community of persons who suffer with brain and nervous system diseases and providers who care for them. Hence, the ad hoc committee will establish a forum for discussing global issues in neurology and focus on the following: (1) ethics in neurological practice, (2) ethics in neurological research, (3) distribution of information on "neuroethics" (ethics in

neurology), (4) education in "neuroethics". Neurological specialists from different geographical areas as well as from diverse cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds have been invited to join the committee. Following preliminary discussions the first topic chosen was "brain death" with the aim of producing recommendations for worldwide minimal standards. A discussion paper based on a European position was presented at the Havana conference (3<sup>rd</sup> International Symposium on Coma and Death, Havana, Cuba, February 22-25, 2000). A draft paper will be circulated in February 2001 for comment from Committee members. The final paper should be presented at the London conference, June 2001.

Topics already addressed: (1) "Biomedicine Convention of the Council of Europe" (EFNS-Congress, Prague, 1997), (2) "Decisions at the end of life" (Danube Symposium, Dubrovnik 1997), (3) "Neuroethical issues in clinical trials. Implementing the ICH guidelines" (EFNS-Congress, Seville, 1998), (4) "Compassionate use/off label use of medicinal substances and medical products" (EFNS-Congress, Lisbon, 1999), (5) "Persistent vegetative state versus apallic syndrome: comparison of two entities (3<sup>rd</sup> International Symposium on Coma and Death, Havana, 2000), (6) "Allocation of resources in neurology: east and west - a challenge to European solidarity" (EFNS-Congress, Copenhagen, 2000).

Intensive preparation with numerous discussions and the collection of information was necessary for the intended completion of the Committee. An archive for special literature and for detailed information was founded. Contacts were made with

WHO, national ethics committees, health organizations and health authorities. A home page is in preparation. There is the suggestion to organize a list of juridical specialists and other experts for special topics to serve on the Committee.

This report provides information about preliminary, past and current activities and should outline a general action plan for the future. The work of the committee will



be officially communicated. A list of the ad hoc Committee members will be circulated in February of 2001.

*Dr. Dr. h.c. Franz Gerstenbrand*

## BOOK REVIEWS

### Charcot-Marie-Tooth Disorders

Editors: Michael E. Shy, John Kamholz, Robert E. Lovelace  
 ISBN: 1-573-31182-0 (cloth: alk paper)  
 No. of Pages: 544  
 Price: US \$150  
 Publication Date: 1999  
 Publisher: The New York Academy of Sciences

This book is volume 883 of the Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences and is based on the Proceedings of the Third International Symposium on Charcot-Marie-Tooth Disorders held in 1998 at Sainte-Adele, Quebec. It is a comprehensive book on these disorders divided into 5 parts. Part I deals with a clinical and pathological review of what constitutes CMT. In Part II discussions are based on Pathogenesis of Demyelination in CMT including Schwann Cell-Axonal interactions and programme of PNS myelination; molecules involved in the pathogenesis of CMT; Schwann cell culture and studies of myelination; mouse and rat models in studies of CMT. Part III is on Genotype/Phenotype correlations in CMT and in Part IV details of Diagnosis and Therapy of CMT are given. Part V consists of poster papers. Current progress made towards the understanding of the genetics, molec-

*(cont. on p. 16)*

It is not too late for you to represent your country in the forthcoming Neurological Tournament which is being held at this year's XVIIth World Congress of Neurology in London, 17-22 June. Every country is invited to form a team of four neurologists to take part. The Tournament will be held as a knockout competition over the 5 days of the Congress and teams will be asked questions covering any aspect relevant to clinical neurology. We hope the Tournament will be treated in a light-hearted fashion and will end with the grand final just before the closing ceremony of the Congress on the Friday afternoon. The Tournament will not only identify the most knowledgeable national team, but will also be highly educational for participants and audience alike. Already countries including South Africa, Italy, Japan and Thailand have put forward teams and we very much hope that many more will do so. If you are interested in taking part we suggest that you contact your country's WFN delegate who has been invited to put together a team for the Tournament.