IN THE NEWS

**AAN ANNUAL MEETING
NEWS ROUND-UP**

The American Academy of Neurology (AAN) Annual Meeting was held in New Orleans from 21–28 April 2012. New events this year included the Controversies in Neuroscience session, which provided lively debate on topics ranging from diaphragm pacing in amyotrophic lateral sclerosis to stenting versus endarterectomy for carotid stenosis (still unresolved after all these years).

2012 also saw the rebranding of Late-Breaking Science to the Emerging Science programme, which featured notable findings in a number of areas. First, Dustin Hammers and Marwan Sabbagh reported on new developments in brain amyloid imaging. Hammers presented data indicating a strong correlation between brain uptake of the PET amyloid imaging agent ^{18}F -flutemetamol and impairments in cognitive function. Sabbagh described a new PET imaging tracer known as florbetaben, which can detect amyloid- β in the brain with high sensitivity and specificity, and might facilitate early diagnosis of Alzheimer disease.

Second, Timothy Vollmer presented the results of a phase 2b trial of the sphingosine-1-phosphate receptor agonist ONO-4641 in patients with multiple sclerosis (MS). Compared with placebo, this oral drug was shown to reduce lesion activity in the brain, and was well-tolerated by the patients. Also on the topic of MS, Mark Freedman provided evidence that early intervention with IFN- β 1a after a first demyelinating event reduces the risk of progression to clinically definite MS.

Third, Warren Olanow reported on a trial of a levodopa–carbidopa intestinal gel (LCIG) for the treatment of Parkinson disease (PD). In patients with advanced PD, continuous infusion of LCIG significantly reduced ‘off’ time, meaning that the patients were able to experience the benefits of levodopa–carbidopa therapy for more hours per day than was possible with a standard oral formulation of the same drug combination.

Last, Charles Bernick presented data on the effects of repeated head trauma during boxing and other combat sports. Study participants who had been fighting for a longer period and had more fights per year showed reduced hippocampal, thalamic and caudate volumes compared with those with less fighting experience. The study also provided evidence for a threshold of repeated head trauma above which impairments in cognition begin to emerge.

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