RANDOM SAMPLES

edited by CONSTANCE HOLDEN

More Private Funding for Alzheimer's

Khachaturian

Zaven Khachaturian, a former research administrator at the U.S. National Institute on Aging (NIA), is spearheading a drive to generate up to $100 million more dollars a year for research on Alzheimer's disease. That would add one-third to the current federal outlay of about $300 million a year.

As head of the Ronald and Nancy Reagan Research Institute, set up last year by the Chicago-based Alzheimer's Association, Khachaturian is pushing a three-pronged program to fund individual research proposals, set up an International Alzheimer's Research Society, and broker partnerships between drug companies and university researchers to speed the hunt for new markers and treatments.

So far, it's all very preliminary, says Khachaturian, who is working on the project with Terry Radebaugh, former director of NIA's epidemiology program. Still, the institute recently got a commitment of $500,000 for educating health professionals from Bayer's Institute for Dementia Research in West Haven, Connecticut, and a $100,000 educational grant from Athena Neurosciences Inc. of San Francisco.

Khachaturian says that most of the institute's money will be raised from families of Alzheimer's victims, companies, and private foundations. The institute's peer-review committees will be "custom-tailored" to each grant proposal, he says, noting that "In a standing committee [such as at the National Institutes of Health], you're lucky if you have one person with expertise in [the] area [covered by a proposal]." Funding decisions will be made by a council of researchers including Marcelle Morrison-Bogorad of Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas, who is moving to Khachaturian's old NIA job. The institute's first 20 grants, of about $50,000 apiece, will go out early this year.

Israeli Science Adviser

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu last month appointed his own science adviser: Israel Hanukoglu, 44, a Turkish-born and U.S.-educated molecular biologist.

Israel's left-leaning media have attacked the appointment as purely political—Hanukoglu served as chair of the 600-member Professors for a Strong Israel, a lobby group that supported Netanyahu's candidacy. But a number of scientists say the appointment is consistent with Netanyahu's pledges to promote science education and computer literacy, and to "anchor peace" through joint projects with Arab neighbors.

Doron Lancet, head of the Weizmann Human Genome Project in Rehovot, says some have questioned why Netanyahu didn't pick a more senior figure for the post, but "[Hanukoglu] is honorable and can do a good job." A researcher at the Weizmann Institute of Science from 1988 to 1995, Hanukoglu is credited with spurring the use of molecular approaches to understanding steroid processes. He now heads the division of social and life sciences in the College of Judea and Samaria.

Hanukoglu told *Science* that Israel doesn't have enough labor power to keep up with the "growing domestic demand for professionals" in computers, biotechnology, and engineering. One of the new administration's plans is to expand retraining programs so the influx of Russian scientists and engineers can fill such jobs.

Matching Alcoholics

In recent years, the results of a number of small clinical studies have bolstered the notion that "matching" particular types of alcoholics with particular treatments—for example, teaching a person with poor impulse control how to think through possible actions—would improve treatment success rates.

But those who would custom-design treatment have been thwarted again by the results of Project MATCH, a 6-year, $27 million study of psychotherapy for alcoholics sponsored by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. At a press conference 2 weeks ago, NIAAA unveiled its main finding: It doesn't seem to matter which kind of therapy you use.

Project MATCH involved 25 research institutions and 1726 alcoholics who were randomly assigned to 12 weekly sessions of one of three types of individual psychotherapy: cognitive-behavioral therapy (for teaching skills to prevent relapse); motivational therapy (to encourage patients to take charge of their recovery); and a therapy based on the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). The main hypotheses were that the first therapy would benefit people with low impulse control; the second, people who didn't want to stop drinking; and the third, spiritually inclined or "meaning-seeking" people.

A year later, the groups' average number of drinking days per month had declined from 25 to six. However, "outcomes were not substantially improved by patient matching," reported psychologist Gerard J. Connors of the New York State Research Institute on Addictions in Buffalo, N.Y. There was one exception: Meaning-seekers and patients with few psychiatric problems did somewhat better with the AA-based therapy. They also went to more AA meetings.

NIAAA director Enoch Gordis suggested that while the results deflated some assumptions, it shows that "competently run programs" that address "all aspects" of a patient do work. The study appears in the January *Journal of Studies on Alcohol.*

Psychologist David Kupfer of the University of Pittsburgh says he's not surprised at Project MATCH's findings, because treatment studies on depression similarly have found that the brand of therapy makes little difference. Clearly, he says, "the [search for] differential treatment effects is tricky."

To Be or Not to Be

Supermarket tabloids may give forecasting the future a bad name, but the Bethesda, Maryland–based World Future Society takes it quite seriously. In the latest issue of the society's magazine, *The Futurist*, longtime editor Edward Cornish took a look at 34 predictions made in the first issue, 30 years ago, by notables such as novelist Arthur C. Clarke.

Cornish found that 23 were right and 11 wrong—a 68% accuracy rate. That's not bad, he says, considering the unpredictables—such as budget cuts that have sharply curtailed plans for human space exploration. Indeed, he says, because of the quickening pace of technological change, "it is now more difficult than ever to predict the future."

1967 FORECASTS FOR THE '80s

RIGHT

- A space station with military uses
- People working at home on terminals linked to remote data banks
- Credit cards that put money out of style
- Common use of artificial organs and human organ transplants
- Widespread use of ultralight metal substitutes

WRONG

- A lunar settlement
- Full-color, 3D TVs used worldwide
- Primitive forms of life made in the lab
- Human planetary landings
- Desalinated seawater widely used in agriculture